

Ark Volume 07

Act 1: Magic Detection

Slime's Immortality Pill's mixing process has been completed.

-You have entered the 2nd stage crystallization process.

Now that you have completely mixed the ingredients together, you must make a decision. This process requires the same amount of concentration that a blacksmith uses to extract good quality iron from iron ores. If the fire is too strong then the ingredients will oxidize and the immortality pill will fail, but if the fire is too weak then the crystallization won't be accomplished well.

<A red colour means that the fire is too strong while the brown means that it too weak. If the strength of the fire is perfect then the colours of the ingredients will be pink. If you fail to efficiently control the strength of the fire then there could be serious losses to the effectiveness of the pill.>

= Crystallization process, time remaining: 6 hours

'Huck, 6 hours? Are they trying to kill me?'

He couldn't resist his impatience to start the immortality pill. After 30 hours of non-stop hunting! It was a situation where he was so tired that he could fly to Andromeda at any time. Then he had to frantically shake the pot for 2 hours. If he moved away during that time then all his efforts would be undone. He didn't have a choice. But after 2 hours, now he had to watch the pot and adjust the fire for 6 hours. It was the most irritating poisonous message window! His anger flared up and he felt murderous. No, he felt like his life was being threatened.

Now when someone died because of online games, it wasn't a newsworthy event anymore. But this game wanted him to die from overworking? It was an irresponsible message window that didn't consider the user's health and would drive them to death.....even though he wanted to argue, there was no one that would listen. System messages were an absolute law in online gaming. A few times other online games also had similar situations. They didn't want to regret abandoning it and would continue to the extent they would get tired and die. It started with thoughts like 'It is simple to end this when I want' or 'I've met a like-minded party but I'll do a little more.' However, when they had to spend a few

hours at work they would start to feel nervous and would begin to play all night. That was how they became addicted to the game.

‘Who can I blame?’

He only had himself to blame for starting the immortality pill too eagerly..... But now that he started it, he had to see it through to the end!

“Okay, I’m going to make the best immortality pill possible!”

Ark stared at the pot with bloodshot eyes.

“Ugh, it increasingly turning red. Temperature down to 20 degrees.....eh? Did I doze off for a moment? Huck, it’s brown. When did the temperature go down? Increase by 10 degrees! Damn, did I raise it too much? Why is it so overheated so quickly? Go down 5 degrees. No, 3 degrees down.”

If he had to move his body then he would rather hunt. If he was careless for even a short moment when staring at the pot then his spirit would begin to sail to Andromeda. Thanks to his sleepiness, his mind was so muddled that it was difficult for him to distinguish between a dream and reality. But he had invested considerable time and money into this. It wasn’t possible for him to fail just before the end. He clenched his teeth and held on until a message window popped up.

-The 2nd stage crystallization process is finished.

You have entered the 3rd stage maturation process.

This is the final step in creating the Slime’s Immortality Pill. The only thing left is to let it mature long enough to draw out 100% of the effect from each ingredient. Make sure to seal it up completely, avoid any direct sunlight and keep it in a cool, dry place.

<Handle with care! There is no guarantee of what will happen if you shake it or it receives an impact.>= Maturation process, time remaining: 64 hours

“I did it.....I’m getting paid!”

Now he didn’t have to stare at the pot anymore. Seeing the information window was as wonderful as if he had received a rare item. Ark sealed the pot and quickly put it in his personal safe. Then he made sure to firmly lock up the cabin. The NPCs that brought him gifts could leave it in the open in the meantime.

‘Now I have to organize the remaining japtem and go to sleep.’

It was currently evening in New World and if he went to sleep then it was likely that all the stores would be closed when he connected again. Because most shops would be closed, he had to empty his bag in advance. However when he visited the general store, the door was already shut.

‘What’s going on? It normally isn’t closed this early…….’

When he looked around he saw that the smithy operated by a raccoon was still slightly open. But his 30% discount in Lancel Village only applied for Galen at the general store. In addition, since there was no specific profession then he would buy all the japtem.

‘If I sell it to other stores then there would be a 50 silver difference.’

Ark forced his eyes open and went to search for Galen. Fortunately, he was able to quickly discover Galen. However the atmosphere was dark. Outside the village, Galen was having a serious talk with Hanson while sighing.

“Galen ajusshi.”

“Ah, Ark!”

“What’s going on?”

“Well, that’s…….”

Galen and Hanson hesitated. Then Sarah grasped Ark’s hands and pointed. On the outskirts of Lancel Village was a big field, where most of New World’s crops could only be harvested twice a year. Lancel Village had become self-sufficient thanks to that field. But the field crops that Sarah pointed to seemed to be in fairly bad condition, even from Ark’s inexperienced eyes.

“Why are the crops so withered?”

“Because of all the residents that left, it looks like it has been neglected for too long. Since the management wasn’t proper, the harvest is in bad shape.”

Galen sighed and replied.

“I never even considered it. When I accepted the 300 residents that you brought, the upcoming harvest season was approaching so I thought the food situation would get better. But our crop isn’t good this year……I don’t know how we’re going to handle the upcoming hard winter.”

In New World, users also had to eat to live. If the satiety fell then they would receive various penalties and if it went down too low then the user would die. It was the same for NPCs. No, it would be an even more serious problem since this world is reality to the NPCs. Then he heard a rough voice from one side.

"Hey, this is my field!"

"What the? I've been planting here for ages. Nobody stopped me when I carried water to these fields."

"So it's yours just because you put your hand on it?"

"How long do you think it has been in my family?"

"How would I know?"

"This bastard, do you think I would just give it to you?"

The farmers who were shouting eventually grabbed each other's collars.

"Guys, what is with this shameful conduct? Stop immediately! Since things are difficult, shouldn't we put aside our pride and help each other?"

Galen ran up to them and shouted in a pained voice.

Just like any other village, the pioneers of Lancel Village also took ownership of the fields. However, the strong sense of community didn't distinguish between what belonged to each other.

They produced it together and used it together. That was the way of Lancel Village. However, it was difficult to avoid in an emergency situation. Since the situation was difficult, they only cared about their own greed and there were endless conflicts. This was the reason that Galen had closed the general store and headed to the fields. The only person who could mediate between the migrants settled here was the temporary chief Galen.

"Is a handful of food so important that you would grab at each other's necks? And shame the village in front of our benefactor Ark?"

"Benefactor?"

The farmer raised his head and glared at Ark.

“What benefactor.....didn’t he make things in the village more difficult by bringing a bandit group or something? It if wasn’t for them then we wouldn’t be so pressed for a good harvest. We’re the ones in this difficult situation because of him!”

“Hey. What are you saying? Ark.....!”

Galen jumped in surprise. However, the farmer didn’t want to hear and turned his head, spitting.

“Anyway, our problems aren’t for the eyes of foreigners.”

‘What’s this?’

Bewilderment spread on Ark’s face at the farmer’s reaction. His intimacy with Lancel Village was the highest possible. Therefore he couldn’t imagine a resident showing such behaviour in front of Ark. But while he was hunting the ingredients for ‘Slime’s Immortality Pill,’ he didn’t pay any attention to what was happening in town so his reputation fell. No, that was the second problem. Ark checked the information in the village town hall with Galen.

The food situation has reduced by 10%.Unity has also been reduced by 10%.

Commerce, industry and armament has also been reduced by 8%.

2 of the village residents have left because of a feud.

Galen related the information from the last days in the village. All of the figures related to village growth were at the bottom. It was a natural result since they were lacking food, an essential condition for survival

‘Is this a usual problem?’

Ark weighed the severity of the problem. His reputation wasn’t the problem. Ark owned a house in Lancel Village. If there was trouble with the village development than the real estate market would also decline. His plan to make a killing in real estate might be falling apart! And if Lancel Village became impoverished again then it would be difficult to receive decent compensation for the <Find New Settlers> quest that he worked so hard on. Ark’s voice became desperate.

“Is there any other ways?”

"We could buy food from somewhere else. But since we've built a lot of houses these days and invested money in fixing the roads, our financial status isn't very good. If our crop conditions don't get better than this winter is going to be a lot harder."

Galen shook his head with a regretful face.

"It's also because 300 people suddenly showed up."

"We can't assume it is the only reason....."

"What other reasons are there?"

"The biggest problem is that the field is ravaged after being left alone for too long. And there are also a lot of monsters around. When there are a lot of monsters, the number of wild animals decreases so hunting becomes harder."

Ark had also seen the monsters in the vicinity of Lancel Village.

"Can we catch the monsters to eat?"

"Most of the monsters in the Argus Mountains are poisonous. If it isn't cooked well then it could be life-threatening. Would we rather be hungry or poisoned?"

"That's a big deal."

"It isn't possible. I'll ask you to consult with the Meow and hunt rabbit and venison for the moment. Since the food is scarce, we must figure out a way to procure it from Jackson. You must be very worried. Unlike the winter and spring harvest, in autumn we can prepare iron since the current price should rise....."

Galen sighed. Ark also couldn't stop sighing. He was now in an inseparable relationship with Lancel Village. If the village was in a tough situation then Ark would also receive several disadvantages.

'Well, in this circumstance it wouldn't be possible to see edible meat at a high price.....'

When the food situation becomes even worse, then the town's financial situation would become devastated. However, the food situation was not Ark's only problem. The population of Lancel Village was already 700 people. He could hunt wild animals for its meat. However, the food situation would only improve by 1%.

"If only there was Yggdrasil's protection....."

Then he heard a voice sighing from the back. When he turned around, one of the raccoon representatives was talking with a melancholy face.

“Even if we didn’t have abundant light, we never had to worry about food at least. My great father was indebted to Yggdrasil’s protection. After I’ve experience the outside world, I realized again how important that protection was. If only I can go back to that place.....”

The raccoon clan representatives that came to the town hall bowed their heads. When the village’s situation became worse, the raccoon clan became homesick for the Underground World. When he heard that even the raccoons wanted to leave the village, Galen’s face darkened even more. However, Ark pricked up his ears.

‘Yggdrasil!’

Yes, the patron of the Underground World! It was in accordance with the covenant where the raccoons keep the secret of the seal while their world was protected by Yggdrasil. But what if such a presence existed in Lancel Village? That was the thought that flashed in Ark’s head.

‘Popo is the seed of Yggdrasil. When Popo is planted near Lancel Village then he might cause the same effect. No, the only thing is to believe it!’

So far he had delayed the <Sacred Soil> quest because of the Slime’s Immortality Pill! Now he had to urgently solve the quest.

‘But the residents are leaving. The cause of all the problems is the food shortage. Completing the quest will solve that but for the moment I need to put out the sudden fire. Yes, JusticeMan ajusshi and the NPCs at the camp should stay clear for a little bit.’

Once Ark organized his japtem he went to visit JusticeMan.

“.....Well, I have actually been concerned about the situation for a while. We’re trying to make sure that the residents of Lancel Village don’t suffer any damage because of us. Alright, for the moment we’ll hunt wild animals even if we have to go far away to hunt the hippos.

Ark who had made progress cut off the connection at once. Since he had stayed awake for 36 hours, heavy fatigue hit as soon as he left the unit.

Hyun-woo screamed and opened his eyes. And he glanced around for a while with a bemused look. There was mould on the gutters, an old wardrobe, a 15 inch TV and a computer set. His virtual reality unit was located in this room and didn't match the dismal surroundings. It was Hyun-woo's room which he paid rent for every month. After a while, Hyun-woo sighed and stood up.

'Phew, it was just a specific dream.'

His clothes were soaked in sweat. When he thought about it, it was a really scary dream. When his mother was hungry, he was forced to cry..... Since the age of 17, Hyun-woo dedicated his life to his ailing mother. To Hyun-woo, hungry and poverty wasn't a horrible thing. No, not being able to provide for his hungry mother was more terrifying than being chased by a ghost or demon. After suffering through 36 hours of the 'Slime's Immortality Pill' and then hearing about the bad situation of Lancel Village, it was no wonder that he had a nightmare after falling asleep. It was only 4 a.m. and he had only slept for 3 hours, but after the nightmare he didn't want to go back to sleep. He decided to leave for the gym in one hour. Hyun-woo washed quickly before sitting down in front of the computer.

"Should I take a look at today's current prices before leaving?"

Hyun-woo connected to the auction site. He consistently sold 2 items a week and had steadily made 1.5 million won. That was 6 million won a month. Since he had to pay a 7% handling charge, the auction site got 420,000 won a month. Thanks to this, his ratings rose quickly and the other day he became a gold member. A gold membership offered many advantages. There was a 1% discount on the fee and information windows about the various items were also provided. This could be useful when trying to determine the selling price, as it listed the fluctuations in the price during the past month.

-The auction has been completed. Crystal Golem's Head: 800,000 won.
-The auction has been completed. Bracelet of Strength: 450,000.
-The auction has been completed. Heavy iron sword: 1,800,000 won.
-The auction has been completed. Deluxe repair box (4): 480,000 won.....

'Except for the Heavy Iron Sword, all the prices are similar.'

Hyun-woo sighed after checking the auction results. The average level of the users had risen by a lot. The sale price for items lower than level 60 was steadily decreasing. On the other hand, the price was increasing for items over level 70. It was the reason why the heavy iron sword, which sold for 1,300,000 won in the past was now sold for 1,800,000 won. But recently Hyun-woo could not sell high level items. No, if he looked at the items he obtained. The unique “Gladiator’s Honour’ or the rare ring ‘Mind’s Eye’ for example.....would be able to earn him several million won. However, both those items were necessary for Hyun-woo. In online gaming, it was common sense to keep the better items first in order to get stronger. He couldn’t blindly sell it just to obtain money.

‘When combining all the items sold this month, isn’t the profit around 4,000,000 won?’

When he checked the ledger on his computer, he saw that it was 4,700,000 won. Thanks to his Magic Restoration reaching the advanced level, he sold some of the deluxe repair boxes that he didn’t need as well as some of his potion collection. There were a few items that weren’t sold at a reasonable price, but overall it wasn’t a bad profit.

‘But it isn’t enough to pay the hospital bills.’

Hyun-woo needed 5,210,000 won every month to pay the medical expenses. It was average. If there was a sudden unscheduled medical treatment, the bill could go over 6,000,000 won.

Fortunately, there was a surplus in his bankbook thanks to the ‘Fire Slayer.’ But if the next month was ordinary like this then it would become difficult.

‘But now I have a full set of bracelets, rings, necklace and shoulder blades. It would be possible to sell items from now on. But I still have to tighten the belt a little bit more. I have to hunt hard and strong.’

Since his life was tight, he had to make money or die. But no matter how difficult his situation was, Hyun-woo never thought that it was unfair. If it was 5 years ago, he probably wouldn’t have been able to last. Since he didn’t know when his mother would be released from the hospital. However, Hyun-woo was not the thoughtless child of 5 years ago. He had seen many people at the hospital. Among them, he saw the pain of parents or siblings who didn’t have enough money. It might be cowardly, but Hyun-woo felt a sense of solace after watching them cry.

‘I will endure it. I now have money to treat my mother and she is looking better. Now is not the time to sound weak!’

He didn't know the importance of his father's existence until he lost him. So he was happy to be able to do something for his mother. He could survive with rice for meals and play the game all night if it meant making enough money for the hospital bills. More.....a little more.....he wanted his mother to be happy.

'To do that, I have to make money even more fiercely. I can't be short even ten thousand won.'

He had everything he needed to achieve this. Hyun-woo scoured the site with bloodshot eyes. It was important to grasp the current market price of items in the game.

'There still isn't a trading group for food ingredients.'

In New World, it was rare for people to earnestly learn how to cook. And because ingredients were sold in general stores, there was nobody like Ark who wanted unique ingredients. Only ingredients like the Mandragora which could be used as a magic ingredient were rarely sold. But he would rather save money and cook his own dishes.

'If there was no expiration date on cooking then I would be able to sell it.....'

The only trouble was that it was a survival cooking dish. Even if he needed expensive spices, the ingredient cost was cheaper than a potion with the same effect but because it was a food, there was an expiration date. Of course, since it was an advanced dish then the expiration date was quite long, however since the dish could become bad when taking the time sold through the auction site in consideration, not many people were willing to spend gold on it.

'I wonder if there are any ingredients that have a preservative effect?'

Hyun-woo clicked his tongue and searched all over the site. His alarm clock suddenly went off and signalled that it was 4.30 a.m.

Bang, bang, bang!

A booming sound rang out as the mat shook. Hyun-woo experienced the wrestling technique where an arm closed around his neck before he was thrown to the

ground. But he had already become used to such pain. Hyun-woo got up and blocked the opponent's incoming arm. If he was the same as before, his opponent would've counterattacked immediately. However, since he strengthened his lower body the opponent couldn't easily use techniques against him. It was a tense match against a National Championship bronze medallist.

"Ha, isn't he doing quite well?"

"He's not tackled so easily anymore."

"Is he really trying wrestling for the first time?"

The SWAT team members swarmed and expressed their admiration. Then Lee Myung-ryong snorted and muttered.

"Bah, he should be able to do this much after sparring every day."

"Hey, that's different. Would any thug be able to learn so quickly just by sparring under master every day?"

"In your own words. He is able to face off against great athletes who have participated in the nationals."

"Shut up, what do you understand? Your standards are at a childish level. Don't you exercise? Would you like to be hit by a knife when you're dispatched?"

"Sheesh, I won't say anything else....."

After Lee Myung-ryong threatened them, the members immediately scattered.

'Certainly.....'

Lee Myung-ryong stared at Hyun-woo. To be honest, he secretly admired him. Of course, Hyun-woo was still a novice at fighting against opponents. The fight would probably be over in 1 minute. But even so, the growth of Hyun-woo was remarkable. After he made Hyun-woo train in boxing, wrestling and taekwondo, now he had to learn how to apply it to his whole body. Boxing was not about hitting the opponent with only arm strength. The action for a punch should naturally come from the waist and footwork. It was the same for wrestling and taekwondo as well. If he didn't take advantage of the whole body then the technique wouldn't be used correctly.

'Even though he is foolish, he has noticed it.....'

Even though martial arts could be understood with the mind, it wasn't easy to apply it to the body. Only a large amount of practice and actual fighting would engrave it into the body. But Hyun-woo had learnt the trick after only one month. He had though Hyun-woo was useable since the first time they met, but it was really beyond expectations. He played all day long and still managed it.

'Who knew that I had such a discerning eye for talent?'

But Lee Myung-ryong soon shook his head and smiled.

'I'm not the one that caused all that talent to emerge.'

Then what was?

'Isn't the answer obvious?'

Besides eating and sleeping, Hyun-woo spent all his time in the game. Thus, his skills seemed to increase every time he appeared at the gym. If so, the answer was the virtual reality game.....he didn't know what it was, but the secret would be there.

'The atmosphere around Hwa-rang hyung-nim also changed after he started the game.....what is it about that virtual reality game?'

While Lee Myung-ryong was thinking, the third round of the wrestling match ended. It was followed by leg exercises and Hyun-woo sparring in taekwondo.

"Teacher, I'll stop now."

"Sure. But why wasn't your steps natural today? Is there something wrong?"

"Just a little bit.....I'm not in good condition today."

"A young guy should have better condition.....take more care."

"Yes."

Hyun-woo nodded and was about to leave the gym.

"By the way.....you and Hwa-rang hyung-nim are playing a virtual reality game called New World right?"

"Is Teacher also interested in the game?"

"No interest.....I'm going now."

Lee Myung-ryong made up an excuse with an embarrassed face. But as soon as Hyun-woo left, he headed straight towards a nearby virtual reality gaming room.

‘What is it about New World that made Hyun-woo improve as well as Gwon Hwarang change his movement so much? Is it different from the other games I’ve played?’

Lee Myung-ryong’s nature couldn’t endure the curiosity. That was the reason why he headed to the game room. After thinking and pacing in front of the room for a while, Lee Myung-ryong finally entered.

‘I’ll never know unless I look for myself.’

So a former member of the national Taekwondo team and a current SWAT team leader was about to step foot in New World.....

“Captain, there have been orders from the headquarters!”

“Sheesh that killed the timing. Alright. Summon the team together and wait.”

.....It would take some time until he could try it out.

‘So I have a cold?’

After he had a nightmare, he wasn’t in very good condition. He seemed fine when exercising at the gym, but after he came home his body started drooping. There was also a headache quietly building. However, Ark returned to New World.

The money earned from just one day playing New World was around 250,000 won. If he was absent for just one day then he would lose 250,000 won.

‘I’m not going to give up 250,000 won just because of a cold!’

When he returned to Lancel Village, the environment was quite dark. After playing New World, his concept of time seemed to be mixed up. When he returned home a little while ago, it was 8 a.m. However, in New World one day had passed and it was now evening. He had somewhat gotten used to it but still found it strange sometimes.

“But one or two days.....”

Since his condition wasn't good after sleeping, it would probably clear up after he played for a bit.

"Then, should I start putting things in order?"

Ark checked the pot in his cabin first. The process of maturation was still progressing without any problems. The only thing left was to wait. He was also level 151. His goal of reaching 150 was reached.

'But there are still a lot of things to do here.'

After communicating with Yggdrasil, he had received the <Sacred Soil> quest. At first, Ark hadn't thought that this quest was important. The compensation received was ambiguous. In order to complete the quest, he had to plant the seeds. Then who would he receive the compensation from? Yggdrasil was in the Underground World so it couldn't possibly give a reward while Popo was just a seed so he couldn't give compensation either. Perhaps he would only receive fame and experience. When he received the quest, he wanted to complete it somehow but the lack of obvious compensation meant he didn't try very hard.

But now things have changed. Lancel Village was having a severe food crisis! Although he wasn't sure, but Popo must be able to solve the problem. Even without a quest reward, it wasn't possible to delay it any longer in case Lancel Village's real estate price declined.

'And.....I was very indifferent in the meantime.'

Ark looked at Popo uncomfortably. When Popo first began to travel, he often spoke to others from the bag. But by the time they had arrived at Lancel Village, his words had gradually decreased until he wasn't talking any more. A plant receives its nutrients from the land. While Popo was in his seed state, he couldn't eat anything. The current Popo had no energy because of a depleted battery.

Since there was no time limit on the quest, he had become too comfortable. If he kept on going like that, Popo would completely have his batteries depleted. After all, Popo was a child of Yggdrasil. If Popo withered up and died, his intimacy with the raccoons might even fall.'

In fact, Ark didn't have a high intimacy with the raccoons that moved to Lancel Village. They were the raccoons who had been transformed into monsters in the Underground World. The monsters that Ark defeated were their colleagues. Therefore, they had no reasons to like him. Even so, the raccoons displayed a friendly attitude to him when Ark arrived in Lancel Village.

'It was to the extent that they gave me a cabin as a present.....'

Ark was able to guess the reason. He was carrying the seeds of Yggdrasil, the guardian of the raccoons which probably gave him an intimacy bonus with them. Therefore, it was because of the seeds that he was favoured. But wouldn't they take their gifts back if he allowed Popo to die? If that happened, he couldn't guarantee what would happen to his relationship with the raccoon clan. So he couldn't put off the <Sacred Soil> quest any longer.

'Yes, it's clear that I have to do this immediately.'

But once he starting thinking, he had no idea about where to start. Even though he had made up his mind, Ark couldn't just wander around aimlessly. When he was searching the Argus Mountains, he always had 'Sacred Soil' in the back of his mind. But even after exploring the Argus Mountains for 20 days, he still hadn't found a clue.

'There are a lot of areas I still haven't seen, but I can't just wander around blindly. Is there any way to obtain information about it?'

At that time, Hanson appeared in Ark's head. Hanson was a cartographer so he should know more about soil than Ark.

Hanson replied after thinking for a while.

"Sacred soil.....yes, I've heard of it before. It is a ground where the power has been concentrated for so long that the earth becomes very powerful. The Northern People used to call it the Sacred Soil whenever it appeared"

"Can it be found in the Argus Mountains?"

"I think so. Because mountain plateaus are one of the places it is most active. Among those places should be an area where an especially strong power is gathered.....maybe where the mountains overlap?"

"The area where the mountains overlap?"

"It is often collected in places like mountain valleys. A northern race used to consider the valley a sacred shelter of the gods and prayed there. Wouldn't there be a relationship between those two things?"

"So you're saying that the Sacred Soil might be found in the ground of valleys?"

"I'm only guessing. I've never seen a Sacred Soil directly. I don't know what it looks like. Even if I saw it then I probably wouldn't have recognized it. Even though it is the Sacred Soil, if the colour is the same then how would you recognize it from the dirt surrounding it?"

Ark's eyes became bigger at Hanson's words.

'Eh? That reminds me, how would I be able to tell that it is the Sacred Soil?'

Why had he never thought of that? He was just blindly trying to find the Sacred Soil. How would he even distinguish it from normal dirt? What if it was identical in appearance? Was there an alternative method?

"Then there is no way for me to find the Sacred Soil?"

"Well from what I heard, the Sacred Soil is imbued with so much power that plants would often grow around it. You should probably look for a place that is strangely overgrown. But since this is the south and the Argus Mountains have lush forests, it might be difficult to find it that way."

Hanson was locked in thought for a moment.

"I don't know if this is useful or not, but someone from the Northern forests might be able to help you."

"Northern forests?"

"Yes, they lived in harsh environments where not many forests grow, unlike the south. So the people there developed a 'special skill' to ensure that they can find anything in the forest, even very small objects. I also heard that they could find the shelter for gods."

"There is a special technique to find something?"

Then a name suddenly appeared in Ark's head.

"Madusein!"

Madusein was the owner of the magic ingredients shop who had ripped him off over the corrupted fairy wings. He remembered hearing him say the same words. Finding something that couldn't be seen required special skills. It wasn't a coincidence that an NPC said those words.

"Thank you."

Ark immediately ran to the magic ingredients shop near the entrance of the village.

“How did I find the corrupted fairy wings?”

“Yes, what was the special ability that ajusshi said was needed?”

Madusein scratched his head and looked at Ark suspiciously. There was often a slow response to the first question asked when meeting an NPC. If they answered the question then it confirmed that the intimacy was high enough. In other words, intimacy was necessary to find the required information. Fortunately, he had bought corrupted fairy wings worth 300 gold of him so there was some degree of intimacy. Thanks to that he barely made it.

“I don’t know why I have to answer the question, but there is no reason to hide it. It’s a technique called Magic Detection. Only a few magicians in the Schudenberg Kingdom have mastered this vision technique.”

Madusein bragged as he replied. Ark asked in an urgent tone.

“Is it possible to learn that technique?”

“Why would I teach it to you?”

Madusein snorted.

“Why do you think I came to live on this mountain? There are various magic ingredients that can only be obtained from the Argus Mountains. There are an infinite number of them, but it isn’t easy to get such important ingredients. So why would I teach you such a technique and have another competitor? I have no thoughts of selling my technique.”

It was a natural reaction. It wasn’t easy to learn skills from NPCs. There must be a significant degree of intimacy, or a reason to teach it such as a quest or pay an equivalent price. In that respect, learning battle or production skills were relatively easy. A warrior’s skill could be learnt from a mercenary NPC. No, there was no need to give money in order to learn. For one thing, repetition of a behaviour would result in a new skill being learnt. If you can see and imitate the NPC, then a new skill would naturally form. The purpose of production was to make money, so NPCs would set up a school where people would pay to learn skills.

However, a magician’s or alchemist’s skill was different. Magic and alchemy was knowledge that had been passed secretly from ancient times! Unlike a warrior’s skill, it couldn’t be learnt by repeating the behaviour. The NPCs desire to monopolize the skill was also strong so they weren’t easily bribed. In the end, the only way was to

find the skill themselves so it was much more difficult to learn a magician's skill than a warrior's. Madusein was a shop owner as well as a magician NPC. It wouldn't be easy to get him to teach the skill. Ark also knew that much. But even Madusein was a resident of Lancel Village. Ark thought he would be able to persuade him by saying it would help resolve the food shortage crisis. When he tried to explain that, Madusein just turned his head and snorted.

"Why do I have to pay attention to things like that? I don't want to hear it. Just get out."

Madusein became annoyed and drove Ark out. His impression from the first time they met wasn't very good and Ark also became annoyed. In fact, Madusein didn't have a good reputation in Lancel Village. There were hardly any interactions with the residents, and he charged the town quite a lot of money while hardly spending anything. Ark hadn't understood even when he bought the fairy wings and he refused to discount even 1 copper. It was a mistake to think that he would obediently teach the skill. However, Ark wasn't the type to give up once he had a goal.

'There are two ways to learn a skill from a NPC.'

One way was through quest rewards and high intimacy. It was the universal method in New World. But after looking at Madusein's character, that way seemed impossible. Then he had no choice but to use the other method. Now, how could he apply pressure to Madusein?

'I have to discover the thing that Madusein needs and then blackmail the skill out of him. The only thing I can remember is the unicorn horn, but I don't know when that would grow back..... does he have any other weakness? Did the magician have a reason for coming to this mountain village? That might be a hint.'

Ark ran around Lancel Village trying to find information about Madusein. But Madusein hadn't been in Lancel for very long. In addition, he didn't interact with the residents so none of them knew him well. In the end, Ark had wasted a few hours struggling.

"Madusein.....there is something I remember. He runs the business but he also has to collect magic ingredients from the Argus Mountains. Therefore, I've never seen him leave the store. But I have heard that he often roams the mountains at night looking for ingredients."

Galen added as if he suddenly remembered.

"He also purchased these strange tools from my store in the past."

“Tools?”

“Hum, it was a hammer or pickaxe as well as a wheelbarrow. Maybe they are tools necessary to dig up the magic ingredients?”

After Galen spoke, Ark became puzzled. Hammer or pickaxe and wheelbarrow.....they weren't normally tools used for picking ingredients. If he never leaves the store except for collecting ingredients, why would he buy such tools? Ark noticed something suspicious with his intuition. After he asked around Lancel Village again, new information came out.

‘New World is a game no matter how much it seems like reality!’

A system where you could only obtain another clue after finding the first one was the basics of RPGs! That rule was also applied to New World. In other words, the residents couldn't answer when he asked them for information about Madusein but once Galen pointed it out, he was bombarded with information about other suspicious events.

“The other day he ordered a large quantity of wood and stone. It wasn't a small amount so he would need a place to pile it up. The store's basement wouldn't be that big.”

It was the testimony of a raccoon.

“I often feel the earth shaking late at night. I asked other people in the morning but they didn't know anything.....is it because I've become weak these days?”

It was the testimony of a resident who lived near the magic ingredients store.

“Recently when I've gone scouting in the forest, piles of soil and gravel would appear overnight. It couldn't be monsters.....so who would have moved the dirt? Well, I don't really want to find out.”

It was the testimony of a Meow warrior guarding Lancel Village.

‘A tool set used for construction. And a large amount of wood and stone. During the night the earth shakes and unidentified piles of dirt appear.’

If he looked at it one by one then he wouldn't have been able to figure it out. But if he put all the information together then there was no doubt. And if he tried to guess the reason then he could only come to one conclusion.

‘Madusein is the type to consider even 1 copper precious so what if.....?’

Ark considered and immediately went to the town hall. After confirming the registration information for the magic ingredients store, Ark was convinced that his idea was right.

‘That Madusein.....I’ve caught you!’

“W-what are you talking about?”

Madusein stuttered with a confused look. It was the expected result.

“Why are you so surprised? The several wide warehouses revealed you. Since you have a lot of money, how about teaching me the technique for free?”

“The warehouse was wide? I don’t know what on earth you’re talking about. I cannot have a rival. Stop talking such nonsense.”

Madusein said as he turned his back quickly. Then Ark asked with a strange look.

“Is it really okay?”

“So what? What do you mean?”

“I’ve examined a few of them. Since it is a pioneering village, instead of promising residents low tax they promised them interest free land. Therefore you have freedom to make an underground cellar underneath your shop. Isn’t that right? Didn’t ajusshi properly receive the land that this store is built on?”

“So?”

“You became greedy and wanted more.”

Ark kept on knocking the floor with his feet.

“I checked it at the town hall. The land that ajusshi received was a 10 metres radius. This store certainly meets those criteria. But what about underneath?”

“U-underneath?”

“Although you have been fairly careful.....Lancel is a small village. You bought tools from the general store and wood and stone from the raccoon family. So what would the owner of a magic ingredients store do with items like that?”

“That, that is.....”

“In addition, a vibration was felt in the earth around here at night. And mounds of dirt appeared in the forest overnight. Does ajusshi knows the answer?”

Ark lifted the corners of his mouth. That’s right. When he put the information together, he could conclude that Madusein was secretly expanding his underground warehouse. The tool kit and wood and stone materials was necessary for the work. And the vibration in the ground was because of the construction. A magician could reduce the noise using ‘silence’ magic, but it wasn’t possible to completely get rid of the vibration. The mounds of dirt and gravel in the forest were because he had secretly moved it there.

In the game, renovating buildings illegally was also a crime! Well let’s think about it. Why would Madusein sneak around and proceed with the construction? Of course, it was because Madusein was a penny pincher. Although migrants were given a certain amount of land for free, if they wanted to widen it then the NPC would have to pay more money. That money was precious to Madusein. Because of that he expanded his warehouse secretly. The reason he built the shop near the village entrance was because there were no other houses around.

“Although it is a little strange. Ajusshi didn’t rest and just kept on collecting ingredients. The only magic ingredients store is in this village so you’ve also been selling the ingredients to other villages. If so, where would you keep all your extra ingredients? I don’t think the small warehouse underground is large enough for that. What would happen if Galen ajusshi figured it out?”

“Are you threatening me now?”

“Threatening? I didn’t say that.....”

Ark slowly narrowed the distance.

“Let’s negotiate.”

“Negotiate?”

“Yes, isn’t this world give and take? There is no reason for ajusshi expanding the warehouse to affect me. If you want then I’ll shut my mouth. But shouldn’t ajusshi also show some sincerity in return?”

“.....What do you want?”

Madusein asked while shooting him a nasty look. But there was no reason for Ark to be afraid. By revealing his feelings, he had admitted defeat. Ark smiled and said.

“Don’t you already know what I want?”

“Don’t tell me! Are you asking me to teach you my vision technique?”

“If you don’t want to then don’t.”

Ark said before turning his body around. Madusein quickly opened his mouth.

“W-wait!”

‘It has ended.’

A smile formed around Ark’s mouth. In fact, he couldn’t have failed in the negotiations. Before Ark started the negotiations, he had already examined the village rules with Galen. If there was an unauthorized construction on the land then the village chief had all rights to take away the building. In other words, the magic ingredients that Madusein collected and stored in the underground warehouse that he widened without Galen’s permission belonged to the warehouse. Lancel Village was already in a crisis situation. Furthermore, the opponent was Madusein who didn’t have a good reputation. If Galen knew this then he would confiscate the ingredients with cheerful arms. He would also scold Madusein who tried to save money by waiting until everyone was sleeping at night in order to expand the warehouse!

‘It would be better to have him teach the skill then give me hundreds or thousands of gold. Because it won’t cost a lot of money immediately. And Madusein’s assets would belong to the village so I wouldn’t get a large profit from it. The chance to learn the skill is a hundred times better.’

If Madusein taught Ark the skill then they would both profit. That was why the negotiations couldn’t have failed.

‘Do not blame me. It was you that did this to yourself.’

“Now, have you decided?”

“.....If I teach you this technique..... ”

“I swear to keep my mouth shut for my whole life.”

Ark laughed while Madusein saw him as a devil. However, he had no choice. Finally, he held out a thin book.

“Damn, here it is. I wrote down everything about the vision magic. Have it and get out.”

Madusein couldn't tolerate the bitterness and turned his head. But he wasn't intimidated by the words anymore.

“Then see you next time.”

Ark said making the NPC even angrier before quietly exiting the store.

‘Huhuhu, you thought that you could just casually eat all my money? I'm the type of person who will make the NPC pay.’

The 300 gold that he wasted buying the corrupted fairy wings! Madusein wouldn't even take 1 copper off the price. Ark hadn't forgotten the grudge from that time.

“Now, let's learn the skill.”

After he opened the book and information window popped up.

A new skill 'Madusein's Vision (Rare) has been learnt.

Magic Detection (Special, Beginner, Active: Using this mysterious magic, it is possible to sense changes in the surrounding magic for 30 minutes. There are various magic ingredients with special effects that can't be seen by ordinary people. Magic Detection can help you grasp those ingredients. However, Magic Detection is limited to plants and objects. You won't be able to find memories of things that have been buried a long time ago. It is impossible to overlap with another vision related skill (Mana cost: 50)

Act 2: Absurd Death

He had learnt a new skill after a long time. Ark immediately headed towards a testing ground to test it out.

“Now, where should I try it out? Magic Detection.”

When he used the skill Ark's pupils shone with a blue light. In the dark evening, Ark's eye lit up the forest! Deimos and Dedric looked on enviously.

“Oh, Master, somehow I feel a great force.”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack!

Ark also liked the special effects. However.....he didn't feel any other changes except for the ones to his eyes.

“What is this? Is this really a skill?”

Ark wandered the forest with an ambiguous expression. As he was walking, he suddenly saw a pale light gathered near a bush. When he approached it looked like the ordinary gravel found anywhere. But it was impossible for an ordinary gravel to radiate light.

“Maybe this is the effect of magic detection?”

As soon as he picked up the gravel then an information window appeared.

-Suspicious gravel (Unidentified)

<Low level texture>

Ark's eyes widened.

‘That's it. That is the effect of Magic Detection!’

On the ground it looked like an ordinary gravel. He had never seen this message whenever he picked up a gravel. And he had picked up countless of them while building a camp or for some other reason. But a gravel had never been registered as an item until now. It was like when those who don't know the value of a gold nugget would think it was just a coated stone. Even if they saw a valuable plant, it would only be weeds for someone without the knowledge. That is the reason Magic Detection was necessary. It could check if a gold bar was a gold bar or if a carrot was just a carrot. However, Magic Detection only told him that the item was special. Finding out why it is special was a different matter. Because the item information would come out as ‘Unidentified.’

“Discerning Eye!”

Sound Ore (Magic Ingredient)

The Sound Ore is a magic ingredient with a unique property. Although it looks just like ordinary gravel, it is an ore that has absorbed the properties of the magic sound

field. When turned into a powder, it can be used to dilute powerful magic.

<Grade 5 Magic Ingredient. Value: 10-20 silver >

Ark used Discerning Eye to display the item information and average market price. Surprisingly it was 10~20 silver! It was 15 silver at most for precious minerals. In addition, general stores didn't buy the minerals at the set value. Although there was a value attached for the harvested ingredients, he couldn't sell them in stores. However, when it was an identified magic ingredient then he could sell it for 90% of the value at the magic ingredients store. Of course, there was no 'feelings' skill better than his intuition. It normally took 5 gold to release a low level protection and identify the object. If it wasn't an amazing magic ingredient then he would experience a loss. However since he could use the 'Discerning Eye' that he developed in the blind auction, it wasn't a problem. In the end, he would still get a profit even if it was a cheap item only worth 1 copper! It wasn't different from picking up money on the ground or in the streets.

'If I pick up an item then I can sell it unconditionally! This is perhaps.....it might be a huge windfall!'

Now he knew why Madusein was so determined to keep the skill to himself. There was no other NPC who could use Magic Detection around Lancel Village. So he had plenty of time to search for ingredients. But if Ark could detect magic then the situation was different. How sick would Madusein be now that he had to share what he had previously eaten by himself?

'Yes, that's why it was so difficult to get from Madusein!'

Ark had a wicked smile on his face.

"I'm going to collect all the magic ingredients in the Argus Mountains!"

The world looked different once he had this skill! Just yesterday it was an ordinary hunting ground and now it looked like a field of money. Money! What other word could make Ark so crazy? Of course he could get items and experience from hunting. But with the extra bonus of finding magic ingredients, he found it fun to wander the mountains. It wasn't tedious even if a monster didn't appear.

'Ores, plants, insects.....they're also magic ingredients!'

He had never seen so many high calibre items piled up neatly in his bag. Bark and larvae that could be used in magic and cooking, magical iron ore and even fruit harvesting that had been impossible until now. Among them were also corrupted fairy wings. There weren't a lot of magic ingredients. During the 30 minute duration

of Magic Detection, he only picked up 4~5 items. If he was gathering common ingredients in 30 minutes, he would find 15 which was approximately 3 times the drop rate of magic ingredients so it was quite low. However since there was a light around the magic ingredient when using Magic Detection, there was no need to walk around looking at the ground like when he was searching for common ingredients.

‘If this light is on my eyes then I can find things that aren’t visible.’

When the corrupted fairy wings falls to the ground, it is transparent. Madusein dyed the transparent wings and sold them. Although he paid 3 gold for one, when he looked at it with Discerning Eye he saw that it was only worth 1 gold. It could only be found using the special skill, but selling it for 3 times the value.....

‘Damn, Madusein was a vicious merchant!’

Ark could say those things but he also wasn’t a gentle person when it came to money. Anyway, Ark once again realized the importance of learning new skills. Madusein was able to sell one corrupted fairy wing for 3 gold because not many people learned the detection skill. Of course, finding equipment items was important to a user as well. However no matter how good the equipment item, it would be replaced with a better one someday. On the other hand, once a skill was learnt then it was there forever. No matter how good the equipment was, it couldn’t last forever. When Madusein sold something worth 1 gold for 3, a person without the skill would have no choice but to accept it grudgingly. It was a professional skill was a huge additional value! It wasn’t a bad idea to learn as much skills as possible.

‘A lot of the ingredients can surprisingly be used for many things!’

He looked at the ingredients. It was an opportunity for him to create even more new dishes. He had only been able to raise his pets stats to level 90 thanks to the limitations of the ingredients. He had already used all the possible combinations of the ingredients in the Argus Mountains to create new dishes. But since he was now able to find magic ingredients, the situation changed. There were dozens of new combinations of ingredients that he could use to create new dishes! Considering the failure rate of survival cooking, he could raise his pets stats by three or four levels. Once again he would use the opportunity to keep his summons in check.

‘I have to tighten my grip again.’

Ark watched the battles vigilantly and waited for a chance. However, Dedric and Deimos made no mistakes.

‘There is a dangerous look in Master’s eyes!’

‘Damn, am I going to be unreasonably scolded?’

The two pets instinctively felt something. The time had come to take extra care! Dedric and Deimos had spent more than a year of game time with Ark. They had faced the same situation several times. If there were no new ingredients then Ark was fine. Ark’s nature was that if there were no new ingredients, then it was better to save them and he didn’t make the torturous dishes anymore. However the situation was different if he was able to create new food. He would catch the slightest mistake and force feed the new dish to them. That’s right, ‘New Ingredients= Force feeding’ was already an official situation! While the discovery of new ingredients was a source of happiness for Ark, to his pets it was a catastrophe! It wasn’t below a catastrophe for them.

“Wah ah ah! Take this!”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack!

Deimos and Dedric immediately rushed forward whenever a monster appeared. Dedric would equip a steel helmet and head butt it while Deimos would grasp the legs until it collapsed. Their combative spirit was to such a degree that the monsters were puzzled whenever fighting the summons. But was that all? No matter how complicated Ark’s instructions, they obeyed them perfectly.

“Uhh, even though I suffered some injuries.....I’m going scouting for Master’s sake. Master, there doesn’t seem to be any monsters in the vicinity. Perhaps you should do some errands?”

Once the battle ended, he would go scouting for more enemies.

‘What’s with these guys?’

Ark became embarrassed of his pets. The monsters in the Argus Mountains were relatively low level. Since there was no way the battle could fail, they were relatively relaxed. Of course, he wouldn’t make up an excuse to feed them. However, he would punish any wrong actions. Those were the rules that Ark had established so far. If he pushed it too blatantly then they would become stubborn and cause adverse effects.

‘Hah, but if they behave too well then it is also a problem. Should I have just continued feeding them from the beginning? But if I used that system would they still listen now? What should I do? I already tried making the plans too complicated so that they would make a mistake.....’

However, that problem was soon solved. There weren't many monsters in the Argus Mountains that could make Ark tense. That was because the monsters hunting ground was across the entire mountains. Among them, the most powerful was the level 100 steel maned gnolls. While there were other higher level monsters, the steel maned gnolls organization and skills made them more difficult to hunt than the level 150 ogres. Their party consisted of five or six steel maned beasts and it wasn't an exaggeration to say that they were the most dangerous enemy in the area. But it was tedious for Ark to face them. Since he had already developed tactics with his summons to deal with them, they weren't very difficult opponents. So when a group of steel maned beasts came running out of the darkness, Ark had no reaction.

'The group is back again. I'll dispose of them quickly since its troublesome.'

If the battle was somewhat unfamiliar, he would examine the surroundings carefully and determine the opponent's strength. However, since he dealt with them often then he thought he didn't need to bother. Even if his condition was worse than normal.

.....That was how the mistake happened.

"Awoooo!"

"Kung kung kung kung!"

When it was in trouble, one of them howled towards the forest and summoned more troops. When it howled, four or five steel maned beasts and gnolls emerged from the forest. Confusion was seen on Ark's face.

'Don't tell me another scouting troop was nearby.....'

He confirmed that he only had 40% health left. He had fought five steel maned gnolls. Normally he would have 60% left. However, he neglected his normal battle principles and paid for it. It was harder than usual for him to concentrate on hunting. Therefore he never noticed the gnoll reinforcements were nearby.....

'Damn, I must have been losing my mind'

However, that was not Ark's real mistake.

'But I can still win. By using a strategy with my pets, I can beat them!'

"Deimos, defensive stance and protect the back!"

Ark shouted as he penetrated the gap. There were two gnoll archers present but he had protection at the back. There was no need to worry. Deimos would understand and stop the flying arrows. But just as he tried to swing his sword, he felt a sharp pain in his side.

-You have received a critical hit from the arrow of a steel maned archer!

240 damage. With the arrow lodged, your movement becomes slow for 30 seconds.

"Ugh, what, what the?"

It was unexpected damage! After Ark turned around, he was able to understand the situation. Ark had commanded Deimos to take a defense stance at the back. However, Deimos was crouched far away and rummaging around the corpse of a dead steel maned gnoll.

"He, he.....!"

His bone collecting skill was activated in this situation of all things.

Deimos has reassembled the tibia bone using his 'Bone collector' skill.

He has replaced it with a sturdy leg bone and is now able to move more quickly.

<Agility +1, Reaction Rate +2>

Deimos was only concerned about the new bone. Then Dedric used the chance to hurl curses at Deimos.

"You foolish skeleton! Do you enjoy your hobby more than your life? Are you going to laugh next? Can't you see that Master is vulnerable because of you? Master, he should be forced to eat your food."

Even if Dedric hadn't said anything, Ark was about to explode. Ark's operations with his summons had gone perfectly recently. Their role in battles had become much larger. But this was a double-edged sword. When a strategy was pulled over perfectly, a fatal weak point was revealed. When Ark was protected by Deimos, he would jump into the crowd to fight. But if Deimos was preoccupied, he was surrounded by himself. In addition, the arrow slowed his movements!

"Grrr, he thinks he can take care of everyone by himself?"

"This impertinent bastard!"

“Kill him. Grab him and tear him apart!”

“Grrr, the flesh has become soft.”

It was a group attack! Their attacks flew from everywhere. He would stumble whenever he got hit. There was no time to use his skills. A red light surrounded him as his health was steadily decreased. It fell to 20% while the arrows that continued to hit his arms and legs decreased his movement and attack speed.

“Dark Dance!”

Ark managed to escape the group using his evasion skill. But naturally, his bad condition even had an effect on his character. The Dark Dance skill became disabled when the completion rate fell below 30% and he received considerable damage.

“He’s struggling!”

“Catch him!”

The gnolls exposed their fangs and rushed towards him.

‘I’m not ready to die fighting against steel maned gnolls…….’

Eventually Ark used a trump card.

“Dedric, Vampire skill activate!”

It was the vampirism skill that Dedric had just learned in the hook bat cave! When he sucked the blood of a monster, he could absorb a random skill that could only be used once. The skill that Dedric had currently absorbed was Grimwing’s ‘Confusing Supersonic Wave,’ which had an 80% chance of causing confusion in opponents with low resistance! The battle situation could change in an instant thanks to that one skill! It wouldn’t be hard to control the dogs that had been confused. However, that was the most crucial mistake committed by Ark. His concentration suddenly fell as he received damage to his neck and all the information windows that popped up displayed a crazy amount of information.

Dedric had used Vampirism on the Steel Maned Gnolls. The existing skill was deleted and a new skill saved.

* Currently absorbed skill: < Howling > Summon all the gnolls in a 100 meter radius.

The steel maned gnoll had been bleeding heavily. Thanks to the blood, Dedric could not resist his blood sucking vampire instincts. When Ark ordered him to use the skill, Dedric lifted his head and howled.

Awo, Awoooo!

It wasn't necessary to see the results. After the howling sound was heard, a group of steel maned gnolls once again came running from the forest. Dedric was surprised and gave a hasty excuse.

"I, I didn't know! It's not my fault! Master ordered me to do it!"

"Damn, this guy is really.....!"

The situation became even more complicated. However, Deimos' and Dedric's nature didn't help the situation. His health was already at a critical condition. In such a situation against another group of steel maned gnolls, the only possible result was death. In addition, he had already sold all his intermediate potions and only have low level ones left. Drinking 1~2 potions that restored 100 health would not help the situation.

'There's only one option!'

Ark pushed the gnolls back using Riposte. Ark's level was 151. With the dark attribute bonus it was 211. But now he had to run away from level 100 monsters..... His pride might be hurt but wasn't living more important?

Kung kung kung kung!

The steel maned gnolls immediately chased after him. But there was a small mercy. His Indomitable Will and Adrenaline had kicked in thanks to his critical condition. Fortunately, his defense and reaction rate increased and he could endure a few attacks while widening the distance. And he soon appeared in front of a sheer cliff. Its height was approximately 10 metres.

'My remaining health is 120. If I use the Cat Knight's flexibility to reduce the fall damage then I can live!'

"Grrrr, die human!"

As soon as the clubs aimed at his head, Ark dived off the cliff. Ark tensed his body and twisted it as he was about to hit the ground. Although he felt some pain, luckily he only lost 30 health.

'I did it! Alright!'

Ark jumped up and scanned the surroundings.

"Grrr, that bastard is alive!"

"Chase after it, it is dinner. Do not miss!"

They started steadily jumping down the cliff. But it would take some time to reach the bottom of the cliff. He used 'Stealth' to widen the distance between them. But just before he left out a sigh of relief, a red light flashed in front of Ark.

-Your pet 'Deimos' has been forcefully recalled to the Netherworld. You have received 50% of his health as damage.

'T-this.....!'

Ark screamed. While he was busy fleeing he had forgotten about his summons. After Ark had run away, the steel maned gnolls had attacked his summons. Dedric had the ability to fly so running away wasn't difficult for him. However, Deimos was completely surrounded and killed. Deimos wasn't a trivial summon like before. Thanks to the evolution and cooking, he exceeded level 90. His stamina was 1,500. When he saw the information window, Ark received a critical hit. Ark received 750 damage. He felt dizzy and strength began to slip from his body.

'It can't be! To die in this way.....!'

Ah, a warm smile could be seen on the faces of the gnolls approaching. So.....Ark became the dinner of the steel maned gnolls.

"Hah, it was crazy."

Hyun-woo sighed as he pulled up the blanket. He wasn't in very good condition as the thermometer showed this his temperature was 39 degrees. He clearly had a cold. It was reasonable. Even though the weather was getting colder, he hadn't been up to turn on the heater because of the gas cost. He even washed with cold water so it

wasn't a surprise that he had a cold. Then he ignorantly exercised at the crack of dawn, so his symptoms became more intense.

'I have to play the game.....'

Hyun-woo stared at the game unit. Game time was money. In addition he died in such an absurd manner. He wanted to restore the experience and stats that he lost. But Ark soon shook his head.

'No, it's better to rest for the moment.'

It was worth enduring. If he acted unreasonably then the situation might become bigger. Being sick wasn't the problem. Ever since the health care privatization, the hospital had become incredibly expensive. Without health insurance, it would cost Hyun-woo 100,000 won just for one visit to the hospital. Once the price of injections and medicine was added, the cost was 150,000. It would also be a problem if his cold became more intense and he had to go to the hospital then he would be unable to play. Hyun-woo bought a herb tonic tea and ate with the blanket wrapped around him. But that was when Hyun-woo's ordeal started.

Since Hyun-woo had been disconnected for a long time, JusticeMan immediately called him. When he told them that he had a slight cold, within 1 hour all the rehabilitation members were over. They came to visit the sick person once they heard the news. Tears welled in Hyun-woo's eyes. He had thought the only place he wasn't alone was in the game. But he was wrong. In reality, Hyun-woo also had people who cared if he had a cold. He was so thankful that he couldn't speak.....but it didn't even take a few minutes to turn into a nightmare.

Dangtangtang!

It was from the kitchen. Hyun-woo stared horrified at the rice that had fallen to the ground.

"My hands slipped.....Hahaha, it's nothing to worry about. I bought a lot of ingredients to make porridge."

Before he could process the words, there was another crashing sound. While Yapsab had been cleaning, he knocked over a vanity table. The lotion bottle that had been on top of it broke and poured out. That wasn't all. While trying to mop up the floor, he used so much strength that the mop was torn apart.

'W-what the hell.....?'

The 10 sturdy men couldn't move around the house without causing accidents.

“Jjak-tung hyung, there’s fire too! The pot.....Huck, Bul-kkun. Be careful lifting the computer.....eh? Yapsab hyung, the table leg is broken so it is barely holding up the centre.....”

Just as he barely settled that side of the room, he had to return to the kitchen.....He didn’t know whether they had come to nurse him or terrorize him. The rehabilitation members seemed to think they were pretty good at housework. Therefore, Hyun-woo started sweating while running around after the rehabilitation members.

‘I might really die.....’

His feverish symptoms became so severe that he really felt like his life was threatened.

“Stop moving!”

All of a sudden a sharp voice was heard in the room. At the moment, the rehabilitation members froze in place. Their fearful gazes turned to where the voice was heard. Standing there was.....Hyun-woo’s saviour. Gwon Hwa-rang had arrived. But the voice that made them tremble in fear was not Gwon Hwa-rang’s.

“Hye-sun?”

The person who had appeared with Gwon Hwa-rang was Jung Hye-sun.

“I knew it would be like this if oppas came first.”

“No, we just.....”

“Enough. I can already guess what had happened. Do you have any idea? Are you here to help Oppa? Or did you come to harass him?”

The terrible rehabilitation members were quickly controlled. As the rehabilitation members pathetically their tail between their legs, JusticeMan said.

“I knew this would happen.”

Anyway, Jung Hye-sun’s appearance was Hyun-woo’s salvation. Once Jung Hye-sung stopped the terrorizing, she gathered the rehabilitation members together and rectified the situation at an incredible pace. The power of a woman was amazing.

While she cleaned up the mess in the house one by one, the fragrant smell of porridge also drifted from the kitchen. Hyun-woo was able to breathe a sigh of relief.

'I lived.....'

How much time had passed? He was able to relax and eat before going to sleep. When he woke up, there was no one around.

'Did they leave without waking me up?'

He saw that it was 10 o'clock at night. He had slept for 2 hours. After sleeping his body seemed to feel somewhat better. His temperature seemed to have gone down quite a bit.

"It is lucky. After taking medicine and resting, I seem to have gotten over my cold.'

Hyun-woo stood up to eat the rest of the porridge and drink medicine. Then the door opened and Jung Hye-sun came in. Hyun-woo who thought everyone had left became surprised and asked.

"Eh? Hye-sun, you haven't left yet?"

"Did you just wake up?"

"Don't you have to go to your part-time job?"

"I called and asked for a day off."

Jung Hye-sun said with a smile. He suddenly saw that she was holding a basin in her hand. The basin was intended to make a wet towel.

'No wonder my temperature decreased.....'

Had Jung Hye-sun been changing the wet towels? Even after JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members had already left? Then in the meantime we were alone in the room? The idea made Hyun-woo's face heat up. After Jung Hye-sun saw Hyun-woo's face, she belatedly realized the situation and stuttered in an embarrassed voice.

"Uh,t-that.....Hwa-rang ajusshi forgot that he had an appointment today.....he said that he would come back later.....it was late so he gave me a ride."

'Damn, that cunning raccoon that was pretending to be a bear!'

"Oh, Oppa, are you hungry? I'll bring the porridge."

"No, I'll go."

Jung Hye-sun put down the basin and quickly grabbed the door handle. Hyun-woo was one step slower so when he reached for it, he grabbed her hand instead.

“.....”

There was a strange silence in the air. It was already late at night. The room was a rented place where a man lived alone. A woman was holding a man's hands while looking at each other. What kind of picture was it?

His heart beat strangely and the white hand he was grasping felt soft. Jung Hye-sun had tied her long hair up to do the housework. Her sleek neck showed underneath it. A raised lip. He didn't have a blood sucking instinct like Dedric, but his saliva suddenly dried up. He heard something that sounded larger than thunder. Hyun-woo was surprised and removed his hand.

No, in this moment the power was in Jung ye-sun's hands. Hye-sun didn't avoid his gaze and stared at him with astonished eyes. There was an incomprehensible power within those eyes. Hyun-woo involuntarily stepped forward, drawn by that power. A man in this situation wouldn't understand the power and he slowly raised his hand to her shoulders. And.....

“Hey, Hyun-Woo!”

Abruptly, a loud sound was heard. At the same time, the magic was broken. Hyun-woo retreated in surprise. They avoided each other's eyes while he went out to see who the unexpected guest was.

“Teacher Lee Myung-ryong?”

“Oh, I came to the right place. I wandered around for a long time looking for your house. I heard from Hwa-rang hyung-nim. You have a cold? Anyway, drink this for the time being.”

Lee Myung-ryong held something out with a laugh. It was a somewhat black liquid.

“What is it?”

“It's my own recipe that I created. It contains ginseng, lemon, carrot, eggs and other things. Drinking this will cure your cold faster than herbal medicine.”

He had created a survival cooking dish in real life.....!

Although Hyun-woo made a face at the ingredients, he had to drink it in front of Lee Myung-ryong. He shuddered as the horrible feeling entered his mouth and slid down his throat. Now he knew what his summons felt when he force fed them food.

“Hah, how was it? This is a man’s drink. Am I also getting a cold? Why do I feel a chill? I’ll go home and make another cup. Then I’ll be going.”

Lee Myung-ryong left after adjusting his collar. There was a pair of eyes staring at the back of his head from the window. It was Hye-sung and her glare was the cause of Lee Myung-ryong’s chill.

He didn’t know whether it was because of Jung Hye-sun’s nursing or Lee Myung-ryong’s survival cooking, but his cold seemed to have completely disappeared. Fortunately, Ark was able to connect to New World again the next morning.

‘Damn!’

He cried angrily after he appeared in Lancel Village and checked the information window. After leaving the beginner village, he had never died. While there weren’t any particular bonuses applied, he had felt a sense of pride at that achievement. But now he had ridiculously died from level 100 monsters on what felt like his home ground, the Argus Mountains.

‘There’s no point in getting hung up on it since I already died. But.....’

Ark had a severe self-criticism time. He had become too lazy after becoming familiar with the monsters in the Argus Mountains. Since he considered the monsters trivial, he hadn’t seen the need to be tense. But a battle was a battle. A different variable was likely to happen at any time. He had died because he forgot this simple fact. However, that was not the whole problem.

‘I’ve been too easy on Dedric and Deimos.’

In fact, yesterday wasn’t the first time he thought that. However, he thought ‘well, it’s just his much.....’ and let them get away with it. Ark thought that it was time to

tighten up the regulations. Since he had been together with his summons for a long time, they've developed some inconvenient quirks. Deimos had developed the bone collecting skill. Collecting bones was an undead instinct. And since collecting bones raised the stats, didn't Ark also benefit? He thought like that and left it alone.

.....It was a mistake. Increasing the stats through bone collection was good. But what use was raising the stats if it couldn't be used to help him in time?

'Dedric was the same!'

He had absorbed the rare boss skill 'Confusing Supersonic Wave'! That was the only skill he received so far. The power of the skill was enormous. Furthermore, he couldn't get it again since Grimwing died. He felt reluctant to give it up but was willing to use it when it was necessary. But Dedric had selfishly used Vampirism and lost the 'Confusing Supersonic Wave'. But was that all? He had absorbed the ridiculous 'Howling' and threw Ark as dog food. He recalled the whole situation and decided to discipline his summons. Ark concluded.

'I made a mistake so I should fix it.'

He had also suffered along with his summons. After eating Lee Myung-ryong's survival dish, he was able to understand his pets' situation. But since he wasn't willing to endure the same problem over and over again, Ark became resolute.

"Summon Demon, Dedric!"

There was a soft light and Dedric was summoned. Dedric nervously twisted his hands and said.

"M-master! What did you do during that time? I was worried. Ah, perhaps you are angry? I really couldn't help it. A vampire has the vampire instincts. I didn't even know I was sucking the blood. So when Master used the skill....."

"You said instincts right?"

"That's right. Instinct, instinct. You know? "

Ark laughed and nodded his head.

"Okay, let's confirm how unbearable your instincts are. Follow me."

Ark suddenly pulled Dedric and headed to the hunting grounds. The unlucky prey caught was a troll.

"Would you like to check it? Dark blade!"

Ark had clearly shaken off the cold and the troll was soon in critical condition. After Snake made a haemorrhage poison, he inflicted another blow.

“Ooooooh!”

The troll that had been stabbed collapsed to the side while bleeding heavily. It was strange. He was talking about vampire instincts and then out of nowhere attacked the troll.....Dedric’s face had been cautious until his eyes suddenly changed. After he saw the blood, his vampire instincts kicked in.

“Bl.....Blood!”

“Resist drinking the blood. Huh?”

Ark had said while glaring at Dedric with a chilly gaze. But once he smelled the blood Dedric went out of control, and despite Ark’s intimidation he flew towards the troll and plunged his fangs into its neck.

Dedric has used Vampirism on the troll. A new skill has been saved in the empty slot.

* Currently absorbed skill: <Revival> For 5 minutes, this will restore the target’s health by 10 every 5 seconds

Trolls were known for having the best restoration skill.

“Good?”

“Oh, this fulfilment and satiety! It is good being born a vampire!”

Dedric rubbed his stomach with a satisfied expression. Then Ark began to smile and approached Dedric.

“Ack, why, why Master? Are you crazy? Did you become crazy since you lay down once? Huk, ah, it hurts! I just had a meal. It’s coming out!”

Dedric swelled up after having his stomach stepped on and vomited out all of the troll’s blood. The skill disappeared after he just got it but Ark wasn’t interested in the skill. Dedric stared at him as he wept with a hurt face.

“Huk huk huk, what did I do wrong that would make you treat me like this? Even if you are Master, this is too terrible.”

“Do wrong? Didn’t I tell you not to drink the blood?”

"B-but the vampire instincts....."

"Didn't I tell you? I'm trying to confirm how much of that troublesome instinct you can endure."

"Huck, don't tell me Master.....?"

Dedric suddenly turned pale as he realized his intention.

"No way! I'm not a dog! This is a violation of human rights!"

"Human rights? You're a vampire. And you as a dog? No, with training a dog can control its instincts. But the fact that Ark's pets can't control themselves is ridiculous. Of course it's not going to be easy. But even so, we have to work together. Because I 'really' love you guys."

Ark laughed while clenching his fist.

"Do you understand? That is the pain of growing up."

".....No, you could have died before when I was beating you....."

"So?" You have to recover before the next training."

Ark immediately took out a pot. Since he hadn't found any excuses for a while, quite a lot of new ingredients had been built up. However, he didn't need an excuse to make something.

Rules? Human rights? Don't be ridiculous.

Ark felt bitter at the mention of human rights and decided not to bother with such trivial things.

"Come and eat. Aren't you hungry after throwing up just now?"

"I'd rather save my stomach."

"Would you rather die and go to hell? Or just eat it?"

Dedric was forced to swallow the food and bent over gasping. Heh, what an unlucky fellow. But Ark just continued the training without lifting an eyebrow. Ark continued to cause a bleeding status in the monsters that appeared. Every time, there was the monster spilling blood, blood, blood, everywhere! But Dedric clenched his fists and endured it. After a few minutes, he succumbed to the vampire instincts and

sucked the blood. The punishment was imposed immediately! After a few hours of violence and torture by food, Dedric became emaciated.

'It's not a joke. In this situation I really will die and wither up!'

It was natural for Dedric to become aware of the danger. The same situation had repeated many times. A gradual change eventually occurred in Dedric. Fear won over instincts! No, a new instinct was produced. Sucking blood would 100% lead to violence and food torture. When sucking the blood, he might be happy. But after the pleasure of the moment, the result would be a world of pain. This idea was so established in his mind that even when the vampire instincts appeared, he hesitated to obey it. His fear had created a new instinct.

"Oooh.....!"

Even though his saliva was spilling out, Dedric endured until the end. It was the first time he had won over the vampire instincts!

"Look, you could do it."

Ark nodded in satisfaction. However, that was not the end of the training. The next training was to fix Dedric's unbalanced diet. Dedric's vampire instincts weren't triggered for every monster. Just like a person had a favourite food, a monster with a more useable skill would stimulate the appetite more.

"Now, this time the trolls."

Ark was cruel once he set his mind on something. While a monster was bleeding, Dedric was forced to suck the blood of other creatures. It was like a court cuisine was placed right in front of a hungry person and they were told to eat instant noodles. From not eating at all.....Dedric now had to quickly develop a taste for all types of blood. Once again he was tortured with food!

Thanks to that, Dedric was able to gain 6 levels in 8 hours.....the horrible situation could be imagined just from that. However, the effect was obvious despite the terrible methods.

"Come on, eat. No, stop."

"Gulp! M-Master!"

Dedric stared at the blood while breathing harshly. Although he had to swallow his saliva, his body did not move. He had instinctively stopped when he heard Ark's voice.

"No. Wait, wait....."

Ark was like a cruel master teasing a dog with meat. After approximately 5 minutes he killed the monster. In the face of despair, the League came up with this dead. A look of despair appeared on Dedric's face.

"Alright. That's it. Even if a monster is bleeding heavily and you want to drink its blood, you are not allowed to without my orders. This standard is enough for now but let's not forget today's lesson."

"Yes!"

Dedric replied obediently after being disciplined. After he completed Dedric's training, he checked the time. 24 hours had passed since he died. He summoned Deimos who had been forcefully recalled.

"Summon Demon, Deimos!"

With a soft light, Deimos was summoned. Ark clenched his fist and smiled.

"Deimos, shall we have a serious conversation about your bone collecting habits that you've been enjoying these days?"

Clack clack clack?

Deimos was confused as he tilted his head. Dedric looked at the next victim with compassion in his eyes.

"Yes, it's better to learn this as fast as possible....."

Act 3: Sacred Soil

"Okay, with this training is over."

Clack.....Clack.....Clack.....

Deimos' jaw trembled with his overwhelming joy. Why did it end so quickly? While a vampire was born into debauchery, Deimos was different and relied on willpower. In addition, his loyalty to Ark was higher than Dedric's and he obeyed his

commands. Therefore the violence and food torture ended earlier than expected. When monsters revealed a bone, he gasped but listened to Ark.

‘Now it’s back to the old system.’

Although the day started badly, he was quite satisfied with the results. Once he decided to invest the day in training, the discipline of his pets was like it was in the beginning. There was also a rise in stats thanks to the food torture! Dedric and Deimos had both reached level 100 stats.

‘The death penalty also disappeared while hunting the minor monsters.....’

It was now time to continue his original purpose of searching for the ‘Sacred Soil.’

Before Ark left Lancel Village, Hanson gave him a few ideas to search. The point where the power concentrates. In other words, a valley. After he had visited around half of them, he still hadn’t found the ‘Sacred Soil.’ Instead, the valleys had twice as many magic ingredients compared to other regions. Unless.....?

‘Ingredients growing faster compared to other regions are the main point. Hanson said that valleys were a gathering place for large amounts of power. The power concentrated in the ground turns the soil fertile until it eventually becomes a Sacred Soil.’

Ark looked at the map and moved to the next valley. The forest gradually became wetter and darker. At that time there was a strange sight. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Even in New World that didn’t change. Then why was there light gathered on the east side of the valley when the sun sets in the west?

‘Something is there!’

Ark hurriedly ran to the valley and descended.

“Huk, what, what the? Is that?”

“What’s the matter Master?”

“What’s the matter? Can’t you see it without me telling you?”

“Isn’t it just a valley? Should I be seeing something?”

Dedric looked at Ark in bewilderment.

‘He doesn’t seem to be joking. Then only I can see it?’

Ark looked at the valley with bemusement. An incredible sight was developing. Nestled deep in the valley, an extravagant brilliance was slowly rising. Dedric and Deimos couldn't see what Ark was looking at. If so, the answer was simple. He was able to see the light because of Magic Detection! Whenever he found a magic ingredient, he only saw a small light bulb flickering at most. However, the light he saw rising from the valley was completely different. The whole valley became hot from the light rising.

'That light isn't coming from plants or ores. The ground itself inside the valley has a magical aura! Then this place.....!'

The Sacred Soil! There was no doubt.

"I've found it. Dedric, Deimos! Follow me!"

Ark immediately followed the gentle slope and entered the valley. However, rare magic ingredients weren't the only things present when power was gathered. Rare Monsters were also gathered there.

Roaaaaar!

As soon as Ark entered the valley, a huge shadow emerged. It was a large, green muscular monster over 5 metres tall. It was an ogre. The ogre's level was 150. It was the strongest monster in the Argus Mountains. They preferred acting alone so it hadn't been a huge problem so far, but 5 ogres had appeared while dragging large stone axes! Ark's current level was 151. It would be difficult to deal with five level 150 ogres. But when he checked the information window, he saw that his dark attribute bonus had been applied. His revised level was 211! At that level he could attempt it.

'But I can't be careless. An ogre is much stronger than other monsters with the same level.'

Just like a NPC or user, a monster couldn't be judged by its level. The physical damage and defense of a level 150 monster depended on the species. Among them, he had to be particularly careful of the ogre. The ogre had strength. While it has low agility and intelligence, it could do a lot of damage with just one blow.

"Dedric, Plan C. Lure two of them. Because its movement is slow, it shouldn't be difficult for you to keep your distance. Deimos, you assist from the side. You don't have to forcefully attack. If you see a situation where it is needed, prepare your defensive stance."

"Okay!"

Clack clack clack! Clack clack!

Both summons moved quickly according to the strategy.

“Over here. You stupid green monsters! Woo-hoo!”

Grrr!

Dedric had smacked the ogre’s cheek before flying in the opposite direction. The ogre’s mouth curled back to reveal its fangs before raising its axe, but the attack couldn’t hit Dedric. He quickly flew out of the ogre’s range as it started wildly chasing him. Two ogres left while three remained.

“Now shall I get started?”

Ark plunged through the ogres. Stone axes attacked him from three directions. Ark ran before sliding through an ogre’s legs. When the three axes struck, the ground shook like an earthquake was occurring. At the moment Ark got up and used a skill.

“Cancel Magic Detection, Eyes of the Cat!”

‘Magic Detection’ and ‘Eyes of the Cat’ couldn’t be used at the same time as the magic was applied to the same eye. Ark’s eyes changed from blue to gold and red spots immediately appeared on the troll’s back. Eyes of the Cat had detected the weak point!

“I have to reduce the number as quickly as possible. Dark blade!”

The ogre’s skin was similar to a high defense armour. However, Dark Blade ignored the defense and dealt a critical hit! There was a flash as his sword struck the weak point and enormous damage was dealt. If it was a normal monster, it would stagger and become off balance. However, the ogre just swung its axe without even flinching. It was an immediate counterattack before Ark could even lift his sword.

‘If I get hit by the counterattack then it would be a critical hit.....!’

This monster was the most difficult opponent. The most effect part of Ark’s combat skills was his critical hits. A normal warrior would invest more in strength than in agility. It was in order to use their basic attacks and wear heavy armour. However, Ark’s agility was currently higher than his strength. When compared to a warrior, his strength was probably two times lower. Therefore his general attack was quite low but his chances of striking a critical hit were many times higher. Since Eyes of the Cat identified the weak points and he used taekwondo principles as well, the chance of a critical hit was 50%! When he struck two times, a critical hit would occur.

That was one of the reasons why his hunting speed was a lot quicker even though his general attack was lower.

However, there was one weakness to that fighting style. He lacked defense since his stats were invested in critical hits. He also didn't have a defense related skill which would give him additional points in defense. Therefore, Ark's lack of health was stressful during a fight. Since Ark would become stiff for a short time after dealing a critical hit, he raised evasion to compensate for that. But if it didn't even flinch at the critical hit, the counterattack would be dangerous since the power of the ogre was unimaginable.

There was the sound of blowing wind as the axe was raised!

Teteng!

However, the stone axe was blocked by a shield. Deimos had taken a defensive stance behind him.

"Okay, that's it."

Ark nodded in satisfaction. The effect of the training was showing. Before the battle, he had ordered Deimos to keep an eye on the ogres from the side. He was probably interested in the ogres' bones. The old him would have blindly ran to it, but after the mental training he focused on the battle. Dedric was the same. Blood flowed from the sides of the ogres that were fighting Ark. Dedric reflexively turned his head at the fragrant smell of the ogre's blood. But when he saw Ark's face he turned around and swallowed his drool.

'Huhuhu, the one day of training was clearly effective.'

He no longer needed to worry about 'bone collecting' and 'vampirism' having an impact on the battle.

"Then should I turn up the heat? Snake, unequip your bags and make the paralysis poison."

Dedric and Deimos were not the only ones who grew. Snake had also steadily developed new abilities. Wandering alone to pick up items or memorizing the necessary ingredients for a recipe were some of the abilities it learnt. Unlike Dedric and Deimos, he didn't demand it of Snake. But Snake wanted to be helpful to Ark and developed it due to its voluntary efforts. And not long ago it had developed another ability. When Ark ordered it, Snake crept up and entered the bag. After it climbed into the bag, it could manually switch from 'item storage' to 'poison manufacture' and create the poison itself. He didn't have to make it do so.

“Saek saek saek!”

After Snake finished manufacturing the poison, it looked up with blue eyes. It really seemed beautiful! That was why Ark couldn't be weak to Snake.

Surururung, chaking!

The sword turned a deadly blue colour after the poison was applied. If there wasn't enough paralysis poison then the critical hit would apply! Ark unleashed a barrage of attacks on the ogres with the poison coated sword. He quickly continued with a series of kicks and defeated two of them down. Meanwhile, Deimos health fell by 80%. The attacks from the ogres were too much even with his high defense. If it was the same as before then it would have been unbearable.....

“Dedric, target Deimos with you vampire skill!”

“Ooh, I got it!”

Dedric activated his vampire skill with glee. The present skill saved was the troll's 'Revival.' Ark also retreated from the ogres until Deimos recovered his health using the buff. Then Ark called in the two ogres lured by Dedric.

“Deimos, during the battle you can search the dead ogres for their bones. Dedric, when the skill slot is empty then I don't care about your vampire habits.”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack!

“Hahaha, I waited for this. Blood! Give me your blood you green monsters!”

Deimos and Dedric cheered and enjoyed their hobby.

-Deimos has reassembled the ribs using his 'Bone collector' skill. He has replaced it with the bone of an ogre and gained a more durable body.

<Strength +1, Attack and Defense +1>

-Dedric has used Vampirism on the troll. A new skill has been saved in the empty slot.

* Currently absorbed skill: <Power> Increases the target's strength by 20 for 30 minutes.

He sucked all the blood. Ark once again coated his sword in poison and attacked the ogres. When Dedric and Deimos were satisfied with their hobbies, they joined the battle which ended immediately. Once he had solved the problem the situation ended smoothly. 'Bone collector' accelerated the growth of Deimos' stats. And Dedric's 'Vampirism' provided the opportunity for Ark to use skills from different professions. Even if he didn't have a priest who could use 'Revival' and 'Recovery,' he would be able to obtain various buffs and attacks to use in different situations. The unfortunate thing with 'Bone Collector' and 'Vampirism' was that they had to obtain it from monsters. In some cases it was obtained at once, but in other cases it took dozens of tries to succeed.

'If I can control it then it would be a skill with high utilization.'

If the results were good then it was a good thing. Then Ark started to actively invade the valley. The goal was to reach where the light was rising inside the valley. However, at the entrance of the Valley there were a significant number of Ogre villages. Although he wanted to urgently find the Sacred Soil, he wouldn't make a mistake like when he fought the steel maned gnolls.

"Dedric, lure a few of them."

Ark carefully gathered the enemy by luring them. Once there was a strategy, even the toughest monster wasn't that difficult. Ark proceeded in an orderly manner for 4 hours inside the valley. There were barely more than a hundred ogres in the Argus Mountains. At the beginning he was on 90% at level 151 and now he had risen two levels to 153. Unfortunately, the ogre was a monster that didn't drop a lot of japtem. Instead it had a low probability of dropping 'Ogre's Blood.' While it could be used as food, as a magic ingredient it could be sold for 3 gold in the stores.

'I picked up 5 so that is 15 gold.'

He was quite satisfied with the experience and income from 4 hours of hunting. However, the ogre had the worst regeneration rate among the large monsters. Once the ogres inside the valley had been exterminated, it would take a few days for them to respawn.

"Unfortunately I can't help it. Now should I go inside? Dedric lead the way."

Ark used Magic Detection again and entered the valley. How far did he enter? Finally the narrow valley widened and an absurd amount of light filled his vision. A huge square was surrounded by cliffs with the light coming from the centre.

"The light is coming from this whole area. The power is being absorbed by the earth. Obviously this is the Sacred Soil. Let's start digging shall we?"

But there was a problem he hadn't thought of. The ground where the light was coming from was definitely made of soil. However, it was as firm as a rock and he couldn't dig out the soil even with his sword.

"Damn, what kind of soil is harder than rock? Let's see how long it can hold up. Dark blade!"

Ark was annoyed and struck the ground.

Double bang, Rumble!

Suddenly the earth started shaking. The earth burst upwards like a stream of water and kept on rising.

1 metre, 2 metres, 3 metres.....10 metres, 20 metres.....!

It rose up until it seemed to pierce the sky. Ark stared at the piles of earth with a foolish face.

"What, what is this? Don't tell me.....a giant golem?"

-Boss monster 'Sacred Soil Guardian Colossus' has appeared!

"Oh my god! That's a boss monster?"

The Colossus was dozens of metres tall with vines and rocks attached to it! The head part wasn't even visible from the foot. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that it was almost a small mountain. Ark confronting it with his sword seemed like an ant attacking with a toothpick. However, he had no choice.

Roaaaaar!

Colossus suddenly swung a fist at Ark. It was like a mountain attacking! Ark rolled his body in surprise. However when the fist made contact, the ground shook and he bounced 1 metre up. The strike literally shook the earth! The shock waves that spread out at the same time also decreased his health. Just the shock wave caused 100 damage! With his defense, one well aimed hit would squish him like a pancake. Ark lost his fighting spirit quickly.

"I made a mistake. How can I deal with this guy? I should forget the quest and retreat!"

And then Colossus threw a nearby rock. There was a roaring sound and the rock ended up blocking the entrance. Of course, he could climb over it. Colossus wasn't

going to let him escape. It took a step forward and swung a fist again from 20 metres away.

“Damn, shall we do this to the end? Dedric, Deimos. Plan A-1!”

“You want to fight against this guy?”

Clack clack clack! Clack clack?

“Shut up, if you want to ask questions then ask that guy!”

When Ark raised his voice, Deimos sighed before going to attack with Deimos. Fortunately, its movement was very slow as it had an extraordinary large frame. Dedric and even the relatively stupid Deimos could easily evade the attacks. Nevertheless, the battle situation was looking pretty gloomy.

“Vampire skill activate. Target Ark. Take this, Dark Blade!”

Ark’s strength rose thanks to the ‘Power’ skill and he used Dark Blade. However, Dark Blade which had defeated numerous monsters only scratched the shell of the Colossus. Only sand and soil fell from where Dark Blade hit and the Colossus didn’t even lost 0.1% of its health. It was also the same for his unbeatable skill Blade Storm.

Bang bang double bang!

Even the sword fragments only created numerous scratches on the Colossus’ skin.

“Unbelievable, even Blade Storm doesn’t work.....”

Roaaaaar!

It did have an effect. The Colossus became really angry. The Colossus wildly beat up the cliff with his fists, making a shower of rocks fall down.

“Huk!”

Dedric freaked out and flew into the sky. Ark used Dark Dance to quickly avoid the rocks. Deimos didn’t have the ability to fly and he also couldn’t use Dark Dance so he instantly lost 70% of his health. If he wasn’t in the defense stance then he would have been instantly recalled.

“What the hell! Deimos, cancel summon! Dedric, disturb that guy’s eyes!”

Ark quickly sent Deimos back to the Netherworld. Anyway, he wouldn't have been useful in this situation. If he was forcefully recalled then Ark would've suffered fatal damage.

'I'm also in the same state. I will either be crushed by Colossus' fists or crushed by a falling rock. I have to attack but there's no sign of his health decreasing.....'

There was also a limit to running away. He couldn't attack while he was avoiding the shower of rocks or the shock waves. In the end, his health decreased as his clothes became muddy. Then, a question suddenly appeared in Ark's head.

'Wait, why hasn't his health decreased? Blade Storm should have done a minimum of 1,000 damage. But it didn't even decrease by 0.1%? How does that make sense?'

Ark looked at the Colossus with Eyes of the Cat. The Colossus was level 250. It was lower than the 'Awakened Heartsoul Bead' he fought in the Underground World. It didn't matter if it was a boss monster. Even if it was an extraordinarily large monster with adjusted stats, 1000 damage should have at least decreased the health.

'That's right, I misunderstood it for a while because it was so big. The health is extremely high but not that impossible. He also has some secrets just like the other bosses!'

Ark was convinced. He had encountered boss monsters in New World. They were so strong that it was difficult to find them in a regular game. He wasn't just talking about their stats. Each boss will have a unique weak point. If he couldn't find it then it would be difficult to win against the boss monster no matter how high the level. The core strategy to dealing with bosses with to identify the weakness and attack it!

'Eyes of the Cat didn't show this guy's weakness. Then.....'

"Magic Detection!"

When Ark used the skill he saw a brilliant light from the body of the Colossus. The Colossus was made from the Sacred Soil so power was gathered in his entire body.

"Was I wrong? I have to find a way to discover the weakness....."

At that time, an idea flashed through Ark's head.

"Overhead!"

Yes, it was the one place that Ark couldn't see from the foot! If the weakness was at the top of the head then he wouldn't have been able to see it with 'Eyes of the Cat' or 'Magic Detection.'

"Dedric, look for something different on the top of that guy's head."

"Wait a minute, huh? I found it. There is a weird lump on top of the head!"

"That's it! Is it possible to attack that place?"

"It's not that difficult."

Dedric answered confidently and flew in. Dark Dash! But soon there was a ringing sound and something bouncing off stone.

"Huck, ah, I can't attack it. It is surrounded by tough skin that my teeth can't break."

Of course there would be a defense around the only weakness. And the only thing that could penetrate it was Dark Blade which ignored all defense. He could also use the power of Blade Storm to destroy the defense as well.

'In other words, I have no choice but to attack directly!'

Ark looked at the huge Colossus and made a firm resolution.

'There is no way to escape anyway. I just have to see it through to the end!'

"Dedric, distract that bastard!"

Ark rushed towards the Colossus.

Roaaaaar!

"Where are you looking? Your opponent is me!"

Colossus instantly reached out his fist as Dedric disturbed him. But the fist of the Colossus eventually struck the ground. After the ground shook, Ark used the force of the shock wave to jump onto his leg.

'This is the correct answer. I can see the way!'

Ark grabbed a vine attached to the Colossus. He then began climbing, the leisure sport that was popular nationwide. It was a sport where people climbed artificial rock walls using gears and fake handles. When his father was still alive, Ark had received lessons for a few months. The Colossus' body was a lot like artificial rock

climbing. Although he couldn't see the entire body, there were rocks and roots placed at regular intervals. Thanks to that he was able to grab the roots and climb to the top.

'I might have forgotten most of what I learned but this is a game. My strength and agility can't even be compared to reality. It is also possible with my increased stamina!'

Strength was necessary in order to climb up artificial rock. But it wasn't only strength that made the movement possible. When grasping a handle to move himself, he would have to calculate the route so that he wasn't stranded in a place with no handles. Ark used his experience to carefully check each time he climbed up the body.

Roaaaaaar!

"This way! Come on, reach up here!"

Dedric flew around and taunted the Colossus.

When he struck with his fists, the shockwaves didn't even hit Dedric. While he tried ripping out rocks and throwing them at Dedric, the accuracy wasn't high enough to hit. Meanwhile, Ark had already achieved a great accomplishment on his climb.

'Huk huk, 10 metres. This climb isn't a joke'

Although it was a game, his whole body seemed to be making a creaking noise.

'Fortunately it seems like the Colossus has forgotten my presence. Anyway, I'll take a break for a moment since I'm halfway there.'

Ark took a break with the vines wrapped around his arm. It was at that time. At Dedric's provocation, the Colossus strongly stomped his foot. The aftermath of the Colossus' retaliation was enormous. Rocks started rolling off the cliff while a huge vibration occurred in the ground. At that moment, the rock that Ark was holding on to popped out from the shock.

"Ugh!"

Ark fell down the Colossus' body. After he fell down 2 metres, his body stopped.

...

Thanks to the vine wrapped around his arm, he didn't fall to his death. However, he had no time to breathe a sigh of relief.

"This, this is.....!"

Ark lifted his head. Round and wooden black eyes were looking at Ark. Because the skin was scratched, the Colossus had noticed Ark's presence. The rocky face of the Colossus warped. Then a fist with a diameter of 10 metres swung towards his waist. It was a situation where Ark couldn't avoid it! Dedric covered his eyes while screaming.

"M-Master!"

Bang bang double bang!

There was a sudden explosion on the Colossus' side. Rock and dirt fell like mist. It slowly cleared up. However, Ark couldn't be seen after the dirt was gone.

"M-master! Are you really dead? Then....."

Dedric murmured puzzled before suddenly laughing.

"Kekeke, in your face! That greedy rice cake is dead! This is divine punishment!"

"Hah, so those are your true feelings?"

"Huk, what, what the? This is Master's voice?"

Dedric freaked out and looked down. Ark was staring at Dedric fiercely from the fist of the Colossus. The thing that connected him to the Colossus' fist.....Saw Blade!

Yes just before Ark had been flattened by Colossus, he reflexively summoned Deimos. Then he used transformation to change him into the saw blade. The saw blade was also available as a whip sword! Ark had managed to wind around Colossus' fist using the whip and avoided his punches. He swung that whip just like Indiana Jones! It was a bit of improvisation during his moment of desperation.

"Really Master! Don't you know that I was joking just then? I really believed that you were alive, really!"

"Shut up before you make me angrier!"

Roaaaaar!

Then the Colossus shrieked and raised his arms. He beat at the cliffs trying to flatten Ark.

'Now!'

Ark was after that moment. The moment the Colossus raised his arms over his head, Ark shook his wrist before releasing the whip. His body rose with the momentum and flew up into the sky. But after a moment, Ark fell down thanks to the force of gravity. He had been thrown 10 metres and was now falling from that high. It was like a bungee situation without the rope. Even a person without a fear of heights would turn pale in fear. But there was no room for Ark to feel fear.

‘Just once! I’m hanging everything on this one chance!’

“Snake, one decent sword!”

Ark grabbed the sword Snake spat out and focused. Once he flew up into the sky, he saw the weakness attached to the top of the Colossus’ head. It was the place where light gathered even more intensely! Ark held his stance in the sky and used his special attack.

“Blade Storm.....eh?”

It happened when the cracks spread like spider webs on the sword. The Colossus sensed a crisis and flinched before retreating.

‘At this rate, Blade Storm will hit the bare ground instead!’

However, there was a black explosion which increased his momentum.

“Dedric, hang onto my back and use Dark Dash!”

“What the? Really? Is that Master’s order? Are you making an irrelevant remark?”

“Shut up and hurry up!”

“Hehehe, okay!”

Dedric let out his resentment while carrying him. Ark pushed towards the body of the Colossus just as Blade Storm occurred. The fragments of the broken sword! The black sword fragments spun like a whirlwind on top of the Colossus’ head. The shield was torn to pieces. The Colossus instantly lost 70% of his health. The barrier that had been difficult to attack was now broken.

“Mind’s Eye!”

Ark immediately activated the special effect of the ring to see in the darkness. His range of vision increased and he saw that he was rapidly approaching the bright spot. Ark swung his sword vertically and used Dark Blade. The sword landed a

critical hit on top of the head. Ark's health decreased to 50% at the same time. It was because he couldn't disperse the fall damage properly.

Roaaaaar!

Colossus shrieked and swung his fist. However it only had 10% health left. Ark swung his sword and used Dark Blade again as the approaching fist suddenly stopped just before his nose. A strange silence floated inside the valley. Then the rocks that had formed Colossus broke off until it had all disappeared. And.....the fist of the Colossus in front of Ark's nose broke apart like sand. The head, shoulders and legs also turned into sand.

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.....

Ark received the continuous message windows that popped up as he was buried in the earth and sand that had collapsed.

"Huk huk huk, damn, I thought I would choke and die."

After a while, Ark pushed the earth and sand apart and crept out. The Colossus seemed really huge but once turned into sand and earth, he appeared quite small. He had managed to defeat such a monster. But he was rewarded for his troubles. He checked the information window and saw that he had gained 6 levels. It was the boss that had given the most experience since the Awakened Heartsoul Bead.

"Ssak ssak ssak!"

Then, Snake's blue eyes emerged as it headed towards an area. When he dug at the earth, a shield appeared.

Sacred Earth Shield (Unique)

Armour type: Steel Shield

Durability: 23/70

Defense power: 200 (+80)

Weight: 50

User restriction: Level 120 or higher with Warrior profession

A shield of superior quality made from high class steel. When looking at its name, it is probably a shield that had been used a long time ago. However it has been buried for a long time in the ground where power gathered, changing its nature. This shield would be difficult to produce with the power of a human. Although all warriors can use it, only warriors with holy powers would be able to draw out 100% of its power.

<Option: Strength +20, Stamina +20, Holy Power +50, Shield Defense +80>

<Special Option: The attack of the whole party increases for 10 minutes once a day, and it is possible to use 'Protection of the Earth' to increase the defense by 100% (Limited to professions with Holy Power)>

"Wha, What it this?" A unique shield!"

Ark checked the item that Snake had picked up in its mouth. It was a level 120 unique shield! When he checked the information window, the additional stats were terrific. The defense was 280. It also increases strength and stamina by 20 points. But was that all? There was an additional 50 points to Holy Power while 'Protection of the Earth' could be used to raise defense by 100%! There hadn't been a lot of unique items with this option.

'Although I cannot use this item.....'

For a while, Ark hadn't been able to make money while he gathered a full set. If so, a unique item would earn a hundred times more than a rare item. He felt warm at the thought of his bank balance having some money after a while.

'Yes! It's been a while since I've been able to buy some nice fruits for my mother!'

How much would he earn with this? When he thought of his mother, tears obscured his face.

"Hehehe, Master. You're a genius at playing cheap tricks in a moment of desperation.....No, strategy! It was really wonderful."

Dedric approached while twisting his hands. Whenever he committed a crime, he tried to appease Ark by flattering him. He was a cunning fellow. Ark stared at him before turning around.

"Hmm, I'll let it go this time. But be careful. I'm watching you."

Ark had become a little generous since he found what he was after.

-Sacred Soil

A mysterious soil that has absorbed the powers of the earth over a long period of time. Since it has absorbed the power, it has the ability to purify the surroundings and promote plant growth.

"Got it, now the <Sacred Soil> quest can be completed and the problems of Lancel Village solved!"

Ark clenched his fist after he checked the information window. Then the message window suddenly turned red as a warning message flashed.

-The Sacred Soil is almost a living organism.

The form of the Colossus was created to maintain the 'Nucleus of the Sacred Soil,' a crystal that had been created after many years of gathering intense power. Once it lost the power of the crystal, the Sacred Soil will rapidly lose its power.

Time remaining: 30 minutes

"What, what is this?"

What is it saying? He had defeated the Colossus using all his strength. He had barely found the Sacred Soil and now it was becoming useless. Ark grabbed his head and screamed.

"Dammit, why did I crack the nucleus?"

Perhaps there was a different way to obtain the Sacred Soil. But the accident had been caused already. No, even if he was in the same situation again then he wouldn't of thought of another method.

"Then I have to plant Popo here before the Sacred Soil loses its power?"

Ark was about to pull out Popo but stopped and flinched. Ark's purpose wasn't just to plant Popo. He wanted Lancel Village that was suffering from a food crisis to receive Yggdrasil's protection. But was that all? Even if Popo was planted here, there was no guarantee that he would grow in the 30 minutes before the soil lost its power. The worst possible situation was that <Sacred Soil> might end in failure.

'Crazy. But I can't just stand here watching.....'

Ark fidgeted as he recalled the contents of the information window.

‘Wait, the Sacred Soil is almost a living organism. Then? Okay, it won’t hurt to try!’

Ark laid both hands against the soil and shouted.

“I call on the Mother of every existence on earth! Please grace us with your presence, Nursing!”

The Sacred Soil was almost a living organism. That was certainly a hint. After Ark used his nursing skill, the light coming from the soil became brighter.

-The health of the Sacred Soil has temporarily become stronger.

Time remaining: 20 min

Originally the soil possessed the power of healing. When Ark added the blessing effect from Nursing, the health of the Sacred Soil immediately became strong again. Once Ark saw the effects, he continuously used Nursing until all his mana ran out. But since it was spread over a large area, Ark could only extend the time limit to 4 hours.

‘The fire is put out for the moment thanks to Nursing. But I can’t just stand here nursing and extending the time limit forever. When there is time, I have to move the soil to Lancel Village.’

There must be a way to move the soil to Lancel Village.

‘But I can’t move this much soil by myself. If I can’t mobilize the residents of the village then it will become difficult.’

However, the villagers were currently in conflict and might not listen to Ark. The method to persuade the villagers.....

‘I have to make them think that the soil is completely necessary.

Once he organized his thoughts, he quickly swept a small amount of Sacred Soil into his pocket. Then he immediately ran to find Galen in Lancel Village.

“What is going on? You said there was something to show?”

It was early morning in New World, and Galen was still waking up when he asked tiredly. However, he soon forgot about sleep as his expression lightened.

‘Huk, this, this is.....?’

‘As expected!’

Ark gripped his fist tightly. When he was confirming the Sacred Soil information, the part about promoting growth attracted Ark’s attention. Lancel Village was suffering because of the food situation. The bad conditions of the crops for this harvest made the situation worse. It was because the fields had been devastated. But if they used the condensed power of the Sacred Soil.....

‘Yggdrasil’s protection would help with Lancel Village’s food situation. But the effect might not solve the food crisis straight away.’

But if the soil promoted the growth of the crops then it would help solve the problem. That was when he thought of the plan to convince the residents to move the soil. As a trial Ark sprinkled a bit of the Sacred Soil in the field. The result was more than expected! The plants that were withered became shinier while the seeds became thicker. Galen’s reaction was natural since he had been worrying about the food problem.

“D-did you perform some magic on the earth?”

“Let’s move somewhere else and discuss it there.”

There was no reason to rush now that he had confirmed the effect on the plants. Ark gathered the residents in the Town Hall and explained the situation to them.

“Sacred Soil! You really found it?”

Hanson shouted in surprise after his explanation. Since Galen still looked confused, Hanson explained it to him.

“The Sacred Soil is the soil that has absorbed the earth’s power. It has absorbed that power over hundreds of years. But I don’t know if there would be an effect on the growth of the crops.....”

“I’ve already tested it.”

Ark grinned and replied. Galen flinched and looked at Ark.

“Then that was the dirt that you threw on the field before?”

“Yes, I sprinkled the ground with Sacred Soil.”

“So it was like that?”

Hanson nodded.

“But according to Ark’s explanation, the power of the Sacred Soil won’t last for much longer. But all the crops are ahead of the harvest. If we are able to maintain the harvest while moving the Sacred Soil and sowing it in, the profit would certainly increase this year.”

“Oh, doesn’t that sound exactly like what Lancel Village needs? How much is there?”

At that moment, all the attention was focused on Ark. If the amount of soil was small then it wouldn’t be any good. Ark paused for a moment before he spoke with a smile.

“There is more than enough to help Lancel Village.”

“Wah ah ah!”

After the tension was broken, the residents cheered with joy. Galen even embraced Ark with tears in his eyes.

“Thank you, Ark! You really are the embodiment of Lancel Village!”

Frankly, Ark never imagined that there would be that much Sacred Soil. Ark had thought there would only be a small handful of the Sacred Soil. Since there was a lot more than expected, he had to think about how to use it.

“But we can’t give you that much in return.”

It was Ark that settled the problem every time something happened in Lancel Village! Galen wanted to do something for Ark and looked at him with an anxious expression. Ark felt refreshed at that moment.

‘What am I doing?’

He had searched for the Sacred Soil to solve the food situation because it would increase Lancel Village’s value. However, he was about to give such a large amount of soil for free? Was he crazy? Although it was also for a quest, if there was no quest compensation then what was the point?

‘I found a unique shield and forgot about my hungry spirit.....you’re pathetic Ark!’

He was disappointed in himself. He even felt anger.

‘After reflecting I have to fix it!’

Ark regretted it deeply.

'It is possible to receive a price for the dirt. But I can't ask for something too excessive. First I have to check how useful the soil is in raising my intimacy with the village before asking compensation. In addition, I have to request something that all the residents can pay.....'

"I am willing to receive any compensation with gratitude. But how about we transfer the soil first? It is best to move it as soon as possible so that the harvest will increase and the residents will be warm for winter. We can discuss the small matter of my compensation afterwards."

"You are different from the other foreigners. If it was other foreigners, they would be trying to get the profit first....."

"Hahaha, as expected from the Truthseeker!"

The Meow elder Hassan struck his stomach as he laughed. Hanson, the raccoon clan and even the villagers looked at Ark with great respect.

'Oppa is my hero.'

Sarah wrote that sentence on the palm of his hand. Galen nodded and looked at Ark with proud eyes.

"I take my hat off to you. Alright. After the work is done, I promise I will give you a worthy reward for your efforts. I hope all the villagers will as well."

'Huhuhu, that's right. By acting to this degree then I can receive the best reward!'

Galen's words lit a fire in Ark's heart.

"Then work will start immediately. Even if we start now, it will still take a few days."

"Okay, gather the villagers who want to help move the soil!"

Then JusticeMan nodded and stood up.

"All the people training at the camp will also help."

"If we want to eat together then we should help too. We'll patrol and prevent monsters from attacking when moving the soil."

"I'll make a cart."

Hassan and the raccoon clan also volunteered and left. The village that had been suffering insecurity and strife thanks to the food crisis suddenly regained hope and

vigour. Everyone raised their hands and the ambitious land reformation project began. When the residents were joined by JusticeMan's rehabilitation group, there were 700 people available. The raccoon clan made carts while the Meow warriors shouldered the responsibility of guarding the residents as they headed towards the valley. And the rest of the people gathered the soil and moved it.

However Ark was the busiest person. There was a huge amount of Sacred Soil. No matter how thirsty he was, he had to use nursing on the soil evenly. If one part of the soil was affected too deeply or not deeply enough then the effects of nursing would disappear when the soil was moved. Therefore Ark had to continuously go around and use Nursing. Apart from that.....a great amount of soil was gathered onto the carts and carried to the village. And scattering it in the fields appeared to be very effective. The withered crops quickly became shiny again while the seeds grew thicker. Thanks to that, the residents were even more inspired to spread the soil. Sarah scattered the soil eagerly with her hands.

"Sarah, you don't have to do that."

Sarah smiled as Ark approached. She spread both arms with a wide grin. She enjoyed working together with everyone. Cute! She was different from Jana. Jana just sat on a nearby roof shaking her tail. The other Meow was patrolling the area while she was alone with her favourite things.

"Jana! You should follow Sarah's example!"

"I'm a shaman. Have you ever seen a shaman do any labour?"

Jana muttered as she stretched and yawned.

Just then.....

Roco returned riding the unicorn and scoffed.

"Bah, there are no shamans who laze around like you."

"Sheesh, another noisy woman has showed up."

Jana replied and turned around to lie on her side. While Jana slept, Roco approached Ark on the unicorn.

"Oppa, the Meow has dealt with the monsters on the hill."

"Really? Then I guess we have to go up the hill. Go tell Galen in the valley that the route has changed. This operation is going to be a few hours ahead of schedule."

"Okay. Sarah, don't you want to see the valley? Come with me."

Roco laughed as she approached on the unicorn. In the meantime, Roco had become quite close to Sarah. Even though she was a child, Roco initially watched her quite closely. Roco was more jealous of Jana who kept on trying to seduce Ark. Sarah who had only travelled with Hanson quickly became friends with Roco.

"Pururuk!"

Sarah hesitated until the unicorn kneeled down beside her. Ark's face crinkled in displeasure. Once again, Ark wanted to kill it.....if it hadn't hidden behind a woman or a child then that bastard would've died by now!

"Oppa, I'm going now. Come on Unicorn."

"Hihihihing!"

The two women got on its back before the unicorn got up and started running.

'If only I can breed it and get the horns from the offspring, then I would eat it straight away.....'

Ark stared at the unicorn until JusticeMan came up to him and muttered.

"Ark. I wanted to say something."

"Yes?" What is it?"

"Honestly, the food situation in Lancel Village became worse because of us. Galen said it was fine but we couldn't help noticing.....so I'm really glad about the good news. Now we can also hold our heads high."

Sincerity was in JusticeMan's voice. He didn't show it but JusticeMan had been struggling with the situation inside his head. Ark felt a little strange after listening to him. Unlike Ark, JusticeMan had experienced every event in the game with NPCs. Was it because of that? While Ark thought of it as a game, sometimes JusticeMan felt like New World was reality. Of course, New World was more meaningful than just a game to Ark. But it wasn't to the extent that he would feel sorrow and joy in quick succession for the circumstances of the NPC.

'Well, it might be fun to play the game that way.'

However for Ark, New World was money! The reason he was nice to NPCs was because they were free money!

'I can't afford to play the game like ajusshi. I can't lose my original intention. If I don't get money then there is no reason to play New World. No, it isn't possible.'

Because it was so busy, the operation was almost finished. Then a problem that he hadn't thought of occurred. They had spent 20 hours carrying and spreading soil. It was more than 2 days for the NPC residents. When the residents who were spreading the soil became tired, the working speed decreased immediately. But fatigue wasn't the only problem.

"Hey, that soil belongs to my field first.

"What are you talking about? You've spread soil on your field many times already."

"The soil that is scattered on my field doesn't have a lot of power. The crops didn't turn out that good!"

"Noisy, do you know how long I had to move that soil?"

The field that was sprinkled with the Sacred Soil first would of course grow faster. Over time, the difference showed itself in the residents frantically trying to sow their fields first. That was one reason that the pace slowed down.

"Please wait."

As soon as the two farmers tried to grab each other's throat, Ark had to jump in between them. He approached the field and laid both hands against the ground before using Nursing.

"Great Earth, please provide power to this site and allow your children to grow strong!"

He could see a bright light as power poured into the soil. Ark produced a huge sigh.

"Now it's done. This field will be fine for a while."

"Y-you.....!"

The farmers who were watching jumped in dumb surprise and lifted a finger. There was a nosebleed dripping on Ark's face. Although the concept of time was different for the NPCs, the 20 hours that Ark spent working on this wasn't easy. Since he ran around and used Nursing continuously, it wasn't a surprise that he got a nosebleed. So Ark just smiled and wiped off the nosebleed like it wasn't a big deal.

"I'm fine. If all the residents make an effort then I will be satisfied. Please continue carrying the soil without fighting. I'll make sure there is enough power for a good harvest, even if my body becomes broken."

The farmers looked at him before grasping his hand.

"Sorry. We must have seemed crazy for a while."

"I don't know what you think of us.....we were also harsh to you the other day. Then you saw us fighting when you have been working hard for two days without resting..... Shameful. I'm really ashamed."

"I was blinded by greed. This soil should be scattered on your field."

"No no. Don't you have a family? You should have a better harvest."

"I will not. I'll just move the soil a little bit faster and more eagerly."

"That's right, that the only way to return Ark's favour!"

The farmers who were impressed with Ark's actions didn't complain any more. Then work continued again until one day had passed. But unlike the first expectations, the situation was gradually getting worse.

'Huk huk huk, it is really never-ending.'

Ark couldn't rest and had to run around using Nursing. When he first made this plan, he had remained optimistic about the time. He thought it would take approximately one day to transfer the soil and 2~3 days for the crops to improve before they could be harvested. It would be difficult but he could use Nursing until then. But when he actually did it, things weren't that easy. When he restored the Sacred Soil in one area, he would immediately have to run somewhere else to restore that soil. When he paused for even a little bit, it would return to ordinary dirt. Ark couldn't become complacent since he was doing it alone.

"Take this!"

Ark looked at the Sacred Soil that had become ordinary with resentment. But he couldn't show his resentment. The Sacred Soil had just lost its power right in front of him. Ark renewed it and turned around.

'If I give up here then the quest will fail.....I really want to clear this now!'

In these circumstances it was difficult to have high expectations for the crops. Even if it returned to ordinary soil it still had an influence on the crops, so it should improve by 20% at least? In addition, he still hadn't prepared the necessary soil for Popo.

'Hang in there! There's only a little bit more time until I can plant you Popo!'

However, his legs felt weak and he started to feel dizzy. While before he had spent 24 hours alternating between resting and hunting, now he was spending the same amount of time running around like crazy while using one skill repeatedly. Then someone caught Ark's shoulders. He saw that it was Galen and the farmers.

"Ark, you're being too unreasonable. You should rest for a moment."

"B-but....."

"I know. While you're resting the soil will return to normal. But you have already done a lot for us. It's not just the crops. We have really cherished what you taught us."

"Yes, even if the soil returns to normal the crops will still be better than before."

"You don't have to do so much anymore."

"Even if the crops don't turn out well, nobody will blame you."

Galen and the farmers spoke as they looked at him with affection. However, he didn't feel that thankful.

'They dare to say that now?'

They had been complaining from the very beginning. Ark almost died running around because of the <Sacred Soil> quest as well as the real estate market price! And now he told to just give up and waste all that suffering? It wasn't enough.

"If I give up here then I wouldn't be able to forgive myself!"

Ark squeezed out every bit of power and used Nursing.

"The Sacred Soil! Please exert more power!"

Instantaneously, an amazing sight occurred. Under Ark's care, the spread of Nursing expanded and the light spread over all the fields. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark with spectacular sound effects.

The Miracle Nursing was successful.

The earth isn't just simply soil. It is the source that gives power to all life and the world will suffer hunger and disease if that power is lost. You have treasured the soil and begun the healing process. Without caring about your life, you have continued to nurse the injured earth. That dedication and effort has touched the earth. The land that was losing its power will listen to the voices of the existences it bears and return the favour. And the power of the amazing miracle will enrich the entire soil.

- * Due to the success of miracle nursing, all stats increase by 1.
- * The Affection stat increased by 10.
- * Fame increases by 50.
- * Increased the alignment to good by 50.]
- * The effect of 'Sacred Soil' will rise by 1.5 times and last for 6 months.

The Miracle Nursing was a success and you have acquired the title 'Caretaker of the Land'

Your fame as a Caretaker has increased, so you will receive praises from many people.

- * As a title bonus all stats will increase by 1.
- * Fame increased by 50.

'The Miracle Nursing!'

With a flash, Ark realized what was happening. Miracle Nursing only occurred when he felt true affection for his patient. However, Ark had only cared about the real estate prices while nursing. Real estate.....In other words, the earth. He was committed to maintaining the real estate price of the land. In other words, it was caused by Ark's obsession for money. The result was truly spectacular.

'Wow, this, unbelievable.....!'

Galen stared at the field with shocked eyes. When the light spread like a wave over the crops, they regained a shine that couldn't be compared to before. The fruit instantly became firmer while the number of seeds increased. It was truly a miracle!

"Ark.....You really.....!"

Galen had stumbled to the shining soil and touched it with quivering hands. The farmers were also crying as they kept on staring at Ark. Ark had laid down so they could only stare at his back. After the tension had been released then all the fatigue came rushing in and he became dizzy. But even the sense of fatigue felt sweet. It was an unspeakable sense of accomplishment!

"I did it.....!"

Ark was stunned and then he fell asleep. He faintly heard the voices of the villagers calling his name.

While he had slept for 2~3 hours, all the work had been completed. The amount of Sacred Soil was enough to make an entirely new field every time they sprinkled it. Thanks to that, the food situation in Lancel Village grew by 60% while the growth of the surrounding forest also rose by 40%. The rehabilitated thieves also kept on improving. But the real change in Lancel Village was just starting. While the work was entering the final stage, Ark headed towards the centre of the village. A dirt bed of suitable width had already been created in the town centre.

The raccoons had dug a large pit and poured out the Sacred Soil until 1/4th of the bed was filled again. He judged that the seeds of Yggdrasil would require that much to grow. As the residents watched, Ark pulled the seed out of his bag. Once he sprinkled water on the soil bed, an amazing spectacle occurred. It looked like a video as light formed a bud, which rose until it formed a tree trunk and branches grew from the trunk. Once the tree was covered with blue leaves, an information window appeared.

Yggdrasil's seed has been rooted in Lancel Village.

Yggdrasil is a sacred tree that maintains the balance. While the tree is growing, Popo cannot communicate. But once Lancel Village receives Yggdrasil's protection, the village will grow quickly. When Yggdrasil grows, the effect given will rise.

* The likelihood of the village being attacked by monsters will reduce by 50%.

* The development speed of the village will increase by 50%.

* The value of the village rises by 50%.

* All NPCs who are resting in the village will have their recovery rate increased by 200%.

*The fame of the village increases by 1000.

'Indeed.....!'

Ark's forecast was correct. Planting Yggdrasil who was the patron of the Underground World had a considerable effect on Lancel Village. Once again, the whole day was a worthwhile investment. The value of Lancel Village rose when Popo's roots were planted. In addition, the effects would grow as Popo grew. This was a stepping stone for the development of Lancel Village. But when Popo grew a branch, the ones who appreciated it the most was the raccoon clans. They surrounded Popo and cheered wildly.

"Yggdrasil!"

"Oh, to think that I would see the birth of the patron with my own eyes!"

Yggdrasil was like a god to the raccoons. When they escaped from the Underground World, the one thing they missed more than home was Yggdrasil. But now Yggdrasil had been planted in Lancel Village. Now the rest of the raccoons would work harder to become a part of Lancel Village.

'It would be more profitable for me as well.'

Ark made a satisfied looking smile.

-Thank you, Ark!

One of Popo's branches abruptly shook and a solemn voice was heard.

'Yggdrasil?'

-Thanks to Popo, I can now observe the world's history. In addition, you have provided the raccoons from the Underground World a chance at a new life. All this is because of you.

"I am also glad."

Ark replied with a smile. Of course, Ark wasn't happy because of Yggdrasil's words. It was because of money. However, he had no intention of telling Yggdrasil that and accepted the thanks gracefully.

-Although this might be insufficient compared to your efforts, but will you accept it?

It was at that time. The light focused on one branch and it broke off.

Sacred Branch (Special)

This Sacred Branch grew from the Sacred Soil. If you always carry this Sacred Branch around with you then you will also receive the effects of Yggdrasil's protection. Even if you were in a desert, you will be able to have a comfortable rest under the shade of a tree and there are opportunities for unforeseen good fortune to occur. In addition, you will be able to communicate with Yggdrasil from anywhere in the world.

<The continuous effects for the Owner>

- * Luck + 30
- * The probability of succeeding all skills +10%
- * Probability of finding a magic item + 20%
- * When resting inside a house, Health and Mana Regeneration +30%
- * Able to communicate remotely with Yggdrasil.

-The quest 'Sacred Soil' has been completed.

Act 4: Slime's Immortality Pill

Hehehe, what kind of luck it this?’

The residents were all watching Ark like he was a hero. This whole show was to obtain items. But an embarrassing giggle kept on escaping from his mouth. Planting Yggdrasil's seed! He honestly didn't have high expectations for that quest. He thought he would only receive experience, fame and an increase in intimacy. There was a reason Ark thought like that. In the Underground World, he had gone through all that suffering to defeated the awakened Heartsoul Bead and save Yggdrasil. At the time he had been satisfied receiving the Dark Piece but after thinking about it later, he realised that he didn't receive adequate compensation. The Dark Piece would've been passed to Ark anyway thanks to the ancient vow with Hero Maban.

‘Didn't that old tree guy manage to stealthily avoid giving me a reward?’

It was a breach of trust! Therefore he hadn't been that concerned about the <Sacred Soil> quest when he received it. Furthermore, Yggdrasil who gave the quest was in the Underground World. Popo was just a seed so he couldn't give compensation. But he was rewarded in this way! Yggdrasil had been saved and he planted the seed.....

Although there was a lot of time in between, this was a connected quest. And the reward he received was because of how long the quest took. It was a sacred branch with a faint light glowing along its length! The success rate of his skills would increase by 10%. Needless to say this was the best option. Compared to other games, the failure rate of skills in New World was a lot higher. This applied to passive skills and active skills like Dark Blade as well as skills like Survival Cooking. The higher the skill level the higher the failure rate would increase. Of course, if he carefully used the skill then the success rate would rise but he could still fail thanks to the system. In the case of a warrior or wizard, it might be the final blow before dying! When producing advanced materials, it might fail at the last moment! When a skill failed then the damage was incredible. Therefore the items that increased skill success when items that all users drooled over. But there was a separate option that made Ark happy.

‘The probability of finding magic items increases by 20%!’

The item drop rate in New World wasn't that high. The reality was the one had to fight countless amounts of monsters before finding a general item. Rather than selling it in shops, they would have to use it until the performance fails. It also wasn't easy to change equipment when you have levelled up. Ark had used the equipment purchased in the beginner village until level 60~70. That was the reason why New World's item prices grew over time. In particular, the magic items would

sell for a lot of money. Although rare and unique items would sell for a lot of money, the chances of them being sold were atrocious. It was similar to trying to win the lottery. On the other hand, magic items appeared pretty steadily.

‘Magic items are a stable income. If there is an extra 20% chance of finding magic items then that is a 20% increase in profit!’

In addition, he could just simply put the Sacred Branch in his bag. There was no need to change his equipment and it could be used forever.

‘Other people might not understand but this is the best item for me.’

“Thank you very much. Ark-nim has brought back our faith and beliefs. Now we can live here peacefully in the future.”

The raccoon clan had approached after he received the Sacred Branch. They had previously talked to him roughly but now they were using honorifics. Once he had planted Yggdrasil, his intimacy with the raccoons immediately shot up. No, aside from intimacy they also had a lot of respect for him. He possessed a branch of Yggdrasil who they served so all their doubts were gone.

“You have kept your promise of friendship with Yggdrasil.”

“Ooh”

The raccoons murmured. Ark became even more awesome in their eyes and they considered him as a friend.

“Please tell us if you ever need us for anything.”

“We will do our best to help.”

“Thank you. Those words.....I will never forget them.”

Ark smiled as he replied. Having skilled craftsmen owe him a favour would definitely be useful.

‘Now shall we cut to the chase?’

Ark turned around and walked towards the general store. It was time to put things in order. Even if he moved the Sacred Soil, the ones that benefited the most was Lancel Village. He made that decision to peacefully complete the quest.....if Ark did the NPCs a favour then shouldn't he receive a compensation? Ark believed in words with good will and put it into practice. If he gave something then he should

receive something in return. That was the first step to a bright and cheery community.

'I don't know when this opportunity will come again. It's better to do it when the atmosphere is nice.'

"Welcome Ark!"

When he entered the shop, Galen greeted him cheerfully.

"You really found an enormous amount of Sacred Soil. The amount of crops planted has been doubled and we will soon be able to harvest it. It should take 2~3 days. Can you believe that? Thanks to you this coming winter.....No, we won't have to worry about food for the next few years!"

"I'm glad I was in the village to help."

Really glad. Because he'll be able to extract even more!

"But the compensation we were talking about the other day....."

At Ark's words Galen steadily became more tense. However his intimacy with Galen was the best so he quickly smiled generously.

"Of course. I already told you that I would give as much as possible."

'Hmm, will it be as expected?'

He'll accept anything within a certain range. In the past, such Galen had said that he would give anything in his power. In fact.....the compensation for this system was the most difficult. When doing a favour for a NPC, if someone asks for an excessively extravagant item or money then of course it wouldn't be accepted. But Ark had also experienced this failure.

When he headed to Cairo from Giran, he had save an injured hunter in the forest. The hunter initially said the same thing.

"You are a life saver. I'll give you whatever is possible for me to give."

Ark had asked for his bow without thinking. Even since the blind auction, Ark's keen eyes were already at a considerable standard. He could estimate the value just by looking at it. The hunter didn't appear to have money. However the bow was made of considerably good materials.

'It is at least a magic item!'

He secretly coveted it! But at his suggestion, the hunter's attitude had a 180 degree change.

"I didn't realize that you were a person with no shame and decency. Are you asking me to give you an heirloom that has been passed down through generations of my family?"

"But didn't you say you would give anything possible?"

"I clearly said that I would offer compensation. I meant things like recovery potions or food, not this valuable heirloom that is worth more than my life. However you used to opportunity for absurd demands, so you're even worse than a jackal!"

"No, it's not....."

"That's enough. I feel ashamed that I owe a favour to a man like you!"

Therefore the hunter gave him some recovery potions and walked away ranting. Ark had forgotten that unpleasant memory for a while but he remembered it again. New World was a huge game. And the people who lived here were NPCs..... They might speak and behave like an artificial intelligence, but in the end they were just a part of the system. Just like people can't escape the physical laws, the NPCs can't escape the rules of the system. There was an upper limit of what they could give to a user. Even if it was a quest received from an aristocrat, a level 1 user couldn't receive the reward that a level 100 user could. This was one of the laws of New World, just like the physical laws in reality.

But it was fortunate that the rules weren't as tight in New World as they were in reality. If the level 1 user judged the situation well, while he couldn't receive a level 100 reward he could at least be rewarded something 10 levels higher. The technology might that he could receive the maximum benefit as long as it was within the upper limit. Sometimes the reward depended on the choice of the user. That was the freedom of New World!

When Galen had offered a reward, Ark had postponed it for the moment. Once all the Sacred Soil was transferred and Galen saw how much it benefited the town, hopefully he would be willing to offer a compensation at the upper limit. However, the situation was the same as before. But the width of the upper limit would rise a little bit more than before.

'I can probably request an item or money immediately.'

The problem was that Lancel Village wasn't an abundant village. Also the finances had gone down in recent years thanks to all the construction! It was the worst time

to ask for a reward. The compensation that he could receive in such a situation was clear. It was probably a common item with an upper limit of 100 gold. Of course, the quest occurred by chance but to only receive 100 gold.....

‘I rescued 700 people from a food crisis just for 100 gold? As expected, something is lacking.’

For Ark, receiving money right now wasn’t urgent. He only had a bag of money, but once Sid returned he would receive thousands of gold. There was no reason to hang himself for 100 gold. At that time, an idea popped into Ark’s head.

‘Since I don’t need money now, I’ll make a long term investment!’

In New World, a user could invest in a village or city. Once a certain amount was invested, the user would obtain a share of the village just like the village chief or Lord. However, there was a prerequisite first. The only way to invest was to have a real estate, guild office or rental warehouse in the village or city. While they were eligible, there was no guarantee that they would be able to invest unconditionally. The grade of the house, the market share, the user’s fame or intimacy with the place were all factors that could affect the investment. Therefore, Ark hadn’t been too interested in investing. But now he possessed a house in Lancel Village!

He had met the minimum eligibility requirements. Thanks to the additional effects of Yggdrasil, Ark was convinced that Lancel Village’s development would rapidly increase in the future.

‘Lancel Village is an unknown mountain town. The land value is at its lowest right now. But if it develops accordingly thanks to Yggdrasil, it will soon be registered as a formal village. Then the land price would also rise. Yes, this was the time for an investment!’

It was worthy of a long term real estate investment. Finally, Ark’s methods of gaining money would expand to the lucrative real estate market. Whether it was hunting, fraud or real estate speculations.....if he earned money then who cared what method he used? After Ark organized his thoughts, he spoke in a deliberately anxious voice.

“I’ve been trying to think of an appropriate reward without affecting the village too much. Hasn’t the village’s finances decreased in recent years due to the construction projects?”

“As expected, you have consideration for such things. Yes, our finances are a little tight at the moment.”

Galen let out a deep sigh. Then Ark quickly said.

“But declining your sincerity would be rude. Therefore I came to a conclusion about my worries. I want to help restore the village.”

“Restore?”

“Yes, instead of receiving a reward how about I receive a stake in the village?”

“A stake in the village?”

“I have a house in Lancel Village so don’t I qualify for a stake?”

“Certainly but.....”

Even if it was a low value pioneering village, they couldn’t just give a share of the village so easily. However, words have different meanings just like ‘Ah’ was different from ‘Eh.’ If he just asked for a stake in the village then Galen may have felt discomfort. But Ark used the word ‘Restore.’ The difference was surprisingly large. He gave the impression that it wasn’t for a profit but was instead for the village. Galen thought for a while and nodded.

“I see. While Lancel Village normally wouldn’t transfer a share to a foreigner, we owe a great debt to you. If you don’t want a reward then we’ll give you a share. 2% should be a suitable compensation for your efforts. How about it?”

700 people lived in the village yet he received a compensation of 2%. If Lancel Village grew as expected, then it wouldn’t be easy to obtain even 0.1% percent of a share.

‘It is a case where having high intimacy with a NPC increased the upper limit. If I become greedier then I might not receive any compensation. But.....’

An opportunity to receive shares wasn’t that common. It would take a lot of money just to meet the minimum requirements. So if there was an opportunity to increase it by even 0.1% more than shouldn’t he take it?

‘Okay, it’s all or nothing! I’ll try it.’

“Can you wait a minute? My stomach is a little sore.....”

Ark made an excuse and left the store. Then he pulled something out of his bag and drank it. It was the ‘Drink of Bewitchment’ that Roco used to seduce the unicorn! It was a drink that increased his charm by 300%. Aside from users, even the unicorn

was affected by the drink that Ark made. If the effect was so powerful then he might be able to use it to increase his reward. Ark entered the general store again.

“Can’t you make it 3%?”

“3, 3%? Aren’t you being a little greedy? Don’t you know how amazing the shares of the village are? Even though it is a pioneering village, 2% isn’t a small amount.”

That was Galen’s immediate reaction. However he had already expected that reaction.

“.....Of course I know. Ajusshi has presented the shares with sincerity, but.....to be called greedy.”

A tear dropped from Ark’s eyes while he made a sad expression.

“As you know, I’m a foreigner. Ever since we were born our destiny was to wander around, never settling in one place. And I had accepted that fate until a little while ago. But my heart has ended up shaken. Galen is a great leader of the village and is like an uncle to me. Yes, I thought that I wouldn’t mind spending the rest of my life in this place.”

“Um.....”

“But I had to leave Lancel Village. That’s because it is the fate of the foreigners. While I wandered around and met lots of people, I sent some of them back here and my heart was shaken again. Then I returned to Lancel and realized clearly. Yes, although I was born with a wandering fate, my home was here. It is my shelter and my hometown!”

Ark seemed to express all his emotions.

“I’m not interested in things like the land. I never thought about being greedy. But my greed has emerged due to my affection for Lancel Village. I love this village and would like to have a bit more of the land. I suppose I’m cheeky for wanting more. So that even if my body is away from Lancel Village, I will always feel like I’m a part of the residents. That was how I became greedy. But.....I suppose my greed became too excessive.”

Ark sighed heavily. Galen silently watched until his eyes became red and teary.

“.....I’m sorry. I misunderstood you. I had no idea you felt that way. I am ashamed of myself. I should’ve known that you weren’t a person who would request something without a reason.....I forgot about all the work you’ve done so far.....”

'It has a large effect!'

Ark inwardly cheered. If the NPC showed these reactions then he was already halfway successful. But he had to stay vigilant until the end. Ark said with a lighter expression.

"No. My greed was too excessive. I'm flattered that you would give a wanderer like me 2%."

"Please don't say that. I apologize."

Galen eventually gave in.

"I understand your sentiment. But 3% is impossible. I can't even increase it to 2.5%. Instead I will give you the right to extend your house, and once the enlargement ends then you can invest 5%. How about that?"

"Thank you."

Ark grabbed Galen's hands. Dududung, with the sound effect a new information window popped up.

<Relevant Investment Information Window>

You have obtained a share of Lancel Village.

A player who owns a house can earn the right to obtain a share of the village. The value of the share will rise as the village grows. When the village earns a big profit, it is possible to apply for a special dividend. Conversely, you can be charged money for anything that threatens the village such as famine, being attacked by monsters and so on.

The upper limit of the share that 1 player can obtain from the village is 2%. However, if you manage to upgrade your house then that upper limit will increase.

Currently owned shares in Lancel Village (Owned/Upper Limit): 2.5/2.5%

'I did it!'

Ark stared at the information window with delight. Lancel Village wasn't simply a high affinity village anymore and had transformed into an investment product. Of

course, he didn't know how much profit the shares would bring. However, the Sacred Soil has promised a great harvest for the next few years. In addition to Yggdrasil's protection, there were 300 ex-thieves who could occupy any position. There was no reason for the commercial value to fall.

'When Lancel Village grows then I will get more profit from the shares!'

There was no reason to hesitate to obtain an investment. When Ark left the store, he immediately went to find the raccoon clan.

"Ark-nim wants to extend his cabin to general housing?"

"Galen ajusshi has already given permission."

"Then of course you'll have it. That fact that Ark lives in such a squalid place actually was weighing on our minds. We will start tomorrow after calculating the labour and material cost."

The raccoons also had to earn a living. Ark sold all the magic ingredients and earned 50 gold. He agree to give a little settlement for the construction materials, depending on the value.

"For Ark we'll use the best workmanship."

They extended the 8th grade cabin to a 7th grade general housing. But it didn't look like the same house. Even though it had the same acreage, the value would change depending on how well it was built. The raccoons were the best craftsmen, so the best housing was built.

'Once Sid brings the money, I need to invest as much as possible when the upper limit is raised.'

Ark's special affection for Lancel Village wasn't a lie. When his assets in the village grows, his affection for it would also grow.

'Isn't Lancel Village located at the intermediate point between Jackson and Giran?'

It was only a matter of time before he was sitting on a cushion of money! He felt like a rosy future was unfolding before his eyes.

“Oh, I’m tired”

He wanted to go sleep on time but there’s always something else to do in an online game.....when that happens then a few hours always passes without him noticing. Didn’t that show how addictive New World was? Since he had to go gym and remember to eat, he only ended up sleeping for 3~4 hours most nights.

“Since the exercise benefits the game, I can’t complain.”

That was Hyun-woo’s strong point. He had made a firm resolve to never give up. He believed that when a person was determined, they would be able to do most of the work. 5 years ago, he never imagined that he would be able to pay his mother’s hospital bills as well as the costs of living. But didn’t he somehow manage to do it with his firm resolve? He managed to survive the hardship and lived. Napoleon’s saying that nothing was impossible was nonsense. Why would nothing be impossible? There were impossible things. It could be found anywhere.

“Hu hu hu hu.”

There was a sudden warm smile on Hyun-woo’s mouth. The sacred steel shield he obtained from Colossus had to be registered.. It was a level 120 unique shield! How much would he get from it? Hyun-woo couldn’t resist and turned on the computer before accessing the auction site.

“The unique blunt weapon I obtained from Valderas sold for 12,000,000 won. The price for a defensive item would usually be less than a weapon but it has a level restriction of 120. Once they see the options then it is possible to receive as much as the unique blunt weapon.”

In New World, the largest profession are the warriors. It was an important factor in determining the demand price. Unique items for warriors would sell at a more expensive price.

“Okay, let’s use this opportunity.”

Hyun-woo boldly set the starting price for the auction at 10,000,000 won. The auction period was two weeks since it might take hours to receive the first offer.

“Now I just have to wait. Then.....isn’t today the last day to submit the report?”

It was once again the submission date for the reports. As always, Hyun-woo quickly wrote the report before the deadline. This time he had a lot of things to include in the report. But since there was only 1 hour remaining, Hyun-woo wrote sparsely and

focused on the important bits. He immediately relaxed his body after the email was sent.

“Phew, I barely made it in time. Should I go to sleep now?”

Hyun-Woo yawned and stretched.

“Alan-nim. It’s been a long time.”

‘Alan?’

He heard a name that had been forgotten for a while on the TV. The familiar face of the reporter smiled and said.

“Alan has always given the impression that he is the centre of New World. Everybody already knows about how you took 1st place in the Event Quest. And didn’t you manage to occupy a castle in Nagaran not too long ago? In addition, you have already successfully defeated two sieges. Everyone is probably wondering this.....what is Alan’s trick?”

“Although I’ve said this before but I’m not playing the game by myself. Luckily I’m in charge of the ‘Dawn Blade’ guild and the results are because of their hard work.”

“Ah, you’re really humble.”

The reporter said and continued to praise him.

“Occupying a castle must give you a significant income. Will Alan-nim soon become rich?”

“I’ve never thought of making money off New World. New World is good as it is and the users and NPCs are also very nice. I wanted to occupy a castle in order to make New World more interesting for them.”

“Brilliant. So what are your future plans?”

“I’m currently expanding the estates. Once the estates in Nagaran are developed then a lot of content will be available.”

“That means you have confidence that you can defend the castle in the future.”

“Of course.”

“Then can we broadcast the siege?”

"That is a little difficult. Since it will show our strategies for the battle. If you broadcast our strategy then all the hostiles guild will know it. It would be a significant penalty. Therefore the siege will have to be private for the moment. Please understand."

"It is a pity. But I understand."

At the end of his words the scene changed.

'That Alan.....he had already occupied a castle?'

His feelings were complicated. In fact, the candidates had started one month later than the other users and therefore had a penalty. When he compared it to the pioneers he fought last time, it was actually two months. Nevertheless, Alan was growing steadily. He didn't know whether he should feel glad or sad. Since Alan was a candidate, he was a rival. Furthermore, there was a hostile relationship between Alan and Hyun-woo. They would definitely cross paths again and he was a formidable opponent.

'I don't know what will happen.....but there's no time to be playing around.'

Even if he tried, he had to catch up with Alan. If he was even a little negligent then the difference would become even bigger. There was no time to relax. He had to earn even just 1% more experience or 1 more copper. Hyun-woo felt like he was being pursued as he returned to the unit. Hyun-woo entered the game again.

Although he was being chased, his actions were still reasonable. The reason that he reduced his sleeping time and arrived at Lancel Village again was because of Sid. When Sid came back then he could proceed with the <Genius Alchemist's Laboratory> quest. But he had to first meet up with Shambala in Selebrid.....There was a lot of things to be done. Before Sid arrived, he had to finish everything in Lancel Village. Because he was being pursued. However, there had been no contact from Sid. Furthermore, it felt like it took a long time for things to progress. It had been 23 days since Ark arrived in Lancel Village. If he included the time in the Evil Silrion, it had been one month. Disposing of items worth 5,500 gold would be somewhat time consuming, but wasn't he taking too long?

'I wonder if something happened?'

When he was busy he didn't think about it, but now his misgivings had started to appear. 58% of the items left to Sid was Ark's share. It was 3,190 gold! If he invested more money than he would've received more profit in return. The reason he wasted 200 gold on the Corrupted Fairy wings and investing in shares of Lancel Village was because he thought he would be receiving a large amount of money soon. He thought that he could afford a long term investment. But what if something went wrong? In New World his entire fortune was gathered there.....just the thought made him sweat.

'Damn, this is why people don't invest. A secure investment like that with a guaranteed profit actually makes me this anxious.....is it only people with a heart of steel that doesn't feel anxious about investments?'

Ark quickly shook his head.

'Yes, it isn't necessary to think negatively. Sid might be a little naive but he is still a merchant. He knows a lot more than me. Since I bought it at a 40% discount then it is impossible to lose money. Sid might be taking his time to try and earn even more money.'

He hadn't left his entire fortune in Sid's hands without thinking about it. Although he failed once and had a bad credit, the hobbit was a fairly resourceful merchant. He was even more cautious because he experienced the failure.

'Anyway, a month has passed so he should arrive in a few more days. Until then let's try something new.'

Of course, the first thing he thought of was hunting. But his level had already rose significantly in Lancel Village. The monsters in the vicinity won't give him much experience anymore. When hunting high level monsters, the addition experience was 10% per 5 levels. However with low level monsters it was the opposite, with every 5 levels lower having a penalty of 10%. But if he couldn't fight high level monsters then it was better to chase a group of them such as the hook bats. However, Ark needed to kill a lot of them thanks to the experience conversion. Therefore, it would take quite a long time for the group to respawn again.

'When I first came, I still received 30~40% of the experience even with the penalty. Now I only receive 2~3% so it would take at least 3 days just to gain one level. Then I'd rather learn a new skill!'

Sometimes skills are more important than level in New World. Ark realized this simple fact once again. 'Magic Detection' managed to turn an ordinary forest into

magic ingredients and normal dirt to Sacred Soil. When learning a new skill, unknown areas of New World would appear. He wouldn't have been able to learn 'Magic Detection' without a high degree of intimacy with the residents of Lancel Village. However now there was an opportunity to learn general skills.

'In Lancel Village there are many NPCs with various skills that are high levelled. There were many skills I'm not familiar with that I might be able to learn. Once I gather information on the skill then I should give it a try.'

Ark earnestly went around Lancel Village gathering information. After Jackson, Lancel Village had become Ark's hometown.

"Oh Ark. Did you want to ask me something?"

Whenever he asked the NPC something, they would answer it with detailed information. As expected, the raccoon clan had the most diversity of skills. However they were craftsmen NPCs, so he couldn't learn the useful skills thanks to his profession. Ark could only learn skills such as 'Wood Harvesting' or 'Mineral Extraction.'

'If I have a break in between then I can gather small change.....'

But Ark already had the Ingredient Foraging skill. Since he was always lacking in bag space, it wasn't possible for him to gather wood or minerals. It took a lot of time to learn skills so most people stopped at the primary production skills.

'I would prefer a skill that could also be applied to battles.'

However it was the same with the Meow. The Meow had numerous combat skills but they were all racial special skills.

'Haha, once I go looking for it there are no skills that I can learn.'

Then something popped into Ark's head.

'No. There are still the skills that Roco and the rehabilitation hyungs learnt. Because they don't have an occupation, the rehabilitation members learnt the skills directly. Then I can learn the skill as well. Furthermore, since I have direct guidance then it shouldn't take that long.'

So Ark went and visited the training centre. Roco was busy trying to finish the lyrics which would raise her skill.

"Eh? What is Oppa doing here?"

She blushed as soon as she saw Ark. Ark also blushed as well. Ever since the strange atmosphere that occurred at his house, the relationship between the two had cooled off a little bit. Of course it wasn't a bad relationship. It was more like they were conscious of each other? However personal business was private. Ark was a nice guy who knew how to keep things separate.

"I came to ask you something. What was the skill you used the other day?"

"Skill?"

"The skill that gave defense to my armour."

"Oh, you mean the laundry skill?"

"How did you learn it?"

"I don't understand either. I just did laundry a lot and then I received it."

'This is it!'

Ark immediately peeled off all the clothes of the people at the training centre. Washing the clothes of 300 people wasn't a joke. Ark carried the mountain of clothes and frantically did laundry in the stream. However, laundry wasn't as easy as it sounded. Ark thought that he just had to wash it. But if he didn't do it properly then the durability and defense would decrease.

"Ark hyung-nim, do you even know how to do laundry?"

"Eh? This is a high grade leather armour....."

"Oh, we're screwed. The defense fell."

There were calls from all over the place complaining about the laundry. Roco shook her head and sighed.

"Oh Oppa. How did you manage to wash it like that? Have you never done the laundry?"

He hadn't. Although it was old, Ark washed all his clothes in a washing machine! All he had to do was press the button on the washing machine, nothing more and nothing less. Roco couldn't stand it anymore and reached out her arms.

"If you do it like that then the dirty water won't fall. Now look. I'm grasping it with both hands and rubbing it with force like this. Ah, that's different. If it is a leather armour then you gently wash it with a cloth."

The world of laundry was more profound than expected. For every colour or material, there was a different way to wash it and it required the appropriate strength adjustments. But with Roco's kind (?) help, he eventually conquered the world of laundry. Just as his waist was aching, a new skill information window was created.

You have learnt a new skill.

Laundry (Beginner, Passive): If you are a true Warrior then you should pay attention cleaning your armour as well as its performance. Even if nice clothes and armour are worn, what is the point if there is an offensive odour?. If you keep the armour clean then the performance would also improve.

<For cloth and leather armour, defense will increase by 5% for 4 hours.>

'Huk huk huk, I finally learned it!'

A 5% rise in defense for 4 hours! He washed thousands of clothes and was rewarded for his effort. Before Roco, he hadn't known that skills like Laundry existed. No, it was probably likely that most users wouldn't know about the skill. It was natural. Who would do laundry in a game? And even if did wash their clothes, doing it thousands of times would be a difficult thing. It was a skill that people would rather buy hundreds of pairs of clothes then learn. The only reason that Roco managed to learn it in the game was because she washed the clothing of 300 thieves. Ark became motivated and met with the rehabilitation members to learn their skills. All the rehabilitation members had 1~2 unique skills.

Among them Ark was interested in Hae Gyeol-sa's 'Intimidation' skill. It was a skill with a lot of uses such as causing merchant NPCs to decrease their prices or making monsters freeze in fear. However, it had a low probability of success and wouldn't failure make the NPCs and monsters even more angry?

"Hmmm, you would like to learn this skill?"

Hae Gyeol-sa asked in a triumphant voice. He suddenly puffed up as his appearance changed and Ark stiffened automatically.

"Don't you know that 'Intimidation' is a very old tradition that I can't just pass on to anyone?"

Even with his history, he still took a few months to learn it. The rehabilitation members were starting to look similar to JusticeMan. Well he was their founder and leader after all.

"I know. But I would still like to learn."

"Hmm although you've realised the greatness of 'Intimidation, other praiseworthy guys have approached me....."

Ark quickly stepped forward and handed him a bottle of liquor.

"Please."

"Oh, then I'll teach it to you!"

The traditional technique was sold for a bottle of alcohol. Anyway, Hae Gyeol-sa grabbed the bottle and dragged Ark to the mountainside.

"Now, I'll teach you the skill. First, the basics of intimidation is the eyes. Star aggressively straight into the opponent's eyes and use the momentum. If you're pushed back then you will fail. Then concentrate all your strength into you abdomen.....and say 'Salrabi Eurachacha'!"

"Eh eh? What did you say?"

Ark's eyes popped out. Then Hae Gyeol-sa frowned and asked.

"What the? You don't understand? First, stare into the eyes of the opponent....."

"Oh, no. I heard all of that. But what was the last one?"

"The last one? Ah, ah, you mean Salrabi Eurachacha?"

Hae Gyeol-sa laughed as he repeated the alien words that seemed to come from Andromeda. Ark's face immediately turned pale.

Shouting out Salrabi Eurachacha.....Even though he said it before, but he couldn't believe Hae Gyeol-sa's words. Ark couldn't understand it and he didn't want to say those words.

"Do I have to do that to learn Intimidation?"

"Huhuhu, of course. That is the core of Intimidation. You have to be strong and effective to scare your opponent. Do you understand? That's why you have to say Salrabi Eurachacha....."

"Please stop."

Ark was appalled and blocked Hae Gyeol-sa's mouth. He really dreaded having to hear anymore. He had heard all sorts of obscenities but he had never heard anyone swear like they were rapping. Although didn't originally gangsters started rapping to solve disputes? It was no surprise that the opponents would shrink back at the bad words.

'I have to speak those bad words if I want to learn Intimidation.....'

He sighed. However, he had already decided to learn. In addition, his pride wouldn't allow him to retreat since he bribed Hae Gyeol-sa with alcohol. Once Hae Gyeol-sa wrote the words on a piece of paper, Ark shouted it in the mountains.

"That's not it! More viciously! Be more lethal! Say it like you really mean it! You really hate the enemy! Your mindset is that you want to kill him!"

"Ah.....Salrabi Eurachacha!"

"Okay, it is getting better."

He shouted it until his voice was cracked and sore.

You have learnt a new skill.

Intimidation (Beginner, Active): You have become adept at intimidating enemies. Sometimes the threat of a single word is more persuasive than one hundred words. When threatened, people with no resistance to fear will have their morale decreased. However, intimidation and provocation are different things. If you fail then there is a chance that you will provoke them.

Mana consumption: 30

< Chances of persuading a NPC has increased by 50%. A monster's morale and will to run will decrease by 50% and they will become stiff for 2 seconds. However, if you fail then hostility will increase by 50%>

"I've learnt it!"

Ark shouted in a hoarse voice. Then Hae Gyeol-sa stroked his head like he was a dog.

"Hehehe, you've learnt this technique in 8 hours. Surprisingly you have an aptitude in this. But now is the road to true intimidation. I want you to have more spirit."

Then he suddenly disappeared as he headed back to the training centre. Ark collapsed with a thud.

“Phew, that was difficult. My body start aching every time I learn a new skill.”

His waist and lower back become sore from washing clothes while his throat was hoarse from swearing. But it was worth it. Laundry and Intimidation were beginner skills, but once their levels rose then they would become quite useful. However, there was another reason Ark wanted to learn new skills.

‘New World has skill sets!’

Once multiple skills were combined then a new skill would be created! Sword Mastery and Hand-to-Hand combat combined to form Sword-Hand Combat, while Nursing with Magic Restoration would create Purification Restoration. The side effects of skills sets were much better than general skills. However, nobody knew what kind of skills could combine. So it was necessary to learn new skills. Well, it was also interesting to look at the new skills developing. Then Ark travelled around learning hunting skills from the rehabilitation members and the reformed thieves. And he learnt some unique skills in addition to laundry and intimidation.

‘Weapon Destruction’ which destroyed the durability of an equipped weapon. There was also ‘Sprint’ which increased his travel speed by 200%.

‘Blade Maintenance’ temporarily increased the performance of his sword.

‘Courage’ boosted the resistance to fear for a period of time.

It was unlikely to be useful immediately, but they were all skills that would help in the future.

“Huhuhu, skills that raised the intimacy with NPCs could also be considered a defensive skill. Now, let’s see what other skills I can learn.....”

Ark was heading back to the training centre after he learnt ‘Courage’ when he suddenly stopped.

“Wait, come to think of it today.....is the third day since I’ve started the Immortality Pill!”

Ark hurriedly returned to his house and opened the personal safe. The pot that had entered the final stages was tinged with a red light. As there passed there was 4

minutes left, 3 minutes, 2 minutes.....an intense light emerged from the pot as it was finally completed. He watched as all the ingredients disappeared and a small pill appeared.

The maturation process has ended and 'Slime's Immortality Pill' has been completed.

You have completed the 'Monster's Pill' that has been passed down from ancient techniques.

The Monster's Pill is one of the hidden secrets in New World. It allows you to maximise the power contained in the Monster's Essence and apply it to you. Making the Immortality Pill is one of the biggest honours for Survival Cooking chefs.

* Fame has increased by 500.

* Intelligence has increased by 20.

* Proficiency in Survival Cooking has risen by 30.

* The 'Monster's Pill' information has been updated.

<Number of Immortality Pill completed: 1.>

"I finally finished it!"

Ark lifted the pill with trembling hands. The required time to make it was 23 days. He had used hundreds of gold to make the pill. However, Ark had regretful thoughts as he looked at the pill.

'This item can't be sold.....'

So obviously the immortality pill would have an enormous effect. The Unicorn Horn was approximately worth 700 gold. The Corrupted Fairy Wings was 300 gold. In addition, it required a significant number of items. Just by calculating, the ingredients were worth approximately 1,500 gold. Given the rarity of the ingredients, it might even be worth 2,000 gold!

However with Survival Cooking, there was no way of knowing the effects of the dish until it was eaten. It was a tremendous amount of money and time that other users wouldn't dare waste. Since the pills have unknown effects, most users wouldn't even spend ten gold on it let alone thousands.

'Drat. I have to just eat it.....!'

2, 000 gold! With that amount of money he could buy lots of small wild ginseng roots. Ark hated wasting even 1 gold and trembled as he brought the pill to his mouth. But he just closed his eyes tightly and swallowed the Slime's Immortality Pill. At the same time an information window appeared.

Slime's Immortality Pill (Immortality Pill Rating: B, Degree of Completion: A)

The power of the Slime in the immortality pill only emerges in unusual circumstances.

It takes the power of an ancient Slime and grants it to someone.

*There is an added bonus according to the degree of completion.

<+5 to all stats, Flexibility +30, Shock Absorption +20%, Poison Resistance +50%>

The resilience stat has been created.

*Resilience (+20): Resilience uses the momentum to increase the defense. Resilience is a stat point that raises the resistance to blunt force attacks by 0.1%. In addition, resistance to stun and petrification also increases by a small amount.

Stat distribution is impossible and it only rises by resisting blunt force attacks.

You have learned the racial skill 'Slime's Time.

'Slime's Time: Once a day, you can choose between two skills. No matter what skill you choose, both skills can only be used again after 24 hours.

1. It is possible to cover your body with a slime coating. Once covered with the slime, all physical attacks will become invalid for 10 minutes. In addition, you will not receive any falling damage no matter how high you fell from. However, you will be vulnerable to magic and receive an additional 100% damage while the damage of your sword will also decrease by 100%.
2. You can summon any type of slime that is within a 500 metre radius. The gathered slime will assist the player for 10 minutes. However, the relationship will become hostile again once the 'Slime's Time' ends.

'J-jackpot!'

Ark's eyes popped out. He thought that he would've received some options as reward for all the trouble. However, the result was beyond his expectation! He expected his stats to rise but he never guessed that a new stat would be created. Ark had the most difficulty dealing with blunt weapons. Since Ark wore leather armour, he was vulnerable to additional damage from blunt weapons. However, Resilience was a stat that boosted his resistance to damage from blunt weapons. But was that all? The description was a bit vague but he gained some slime racial skills. Skills that were locked to specific species couldn't be learnt by other races.

'The reward was worth all that trouble!'

As an added bonus, the degree of completion was more than expected. All his stats increased by +5 while his flexibility stat that was difficult to increase rose by 30! Shock absorption also increased by 20% and poison resistance by 50%. He gained the characteristics of a slime thanks to the immortality pill.

"Let's confirm the stats.....Information Window!"

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---|--|
| Character Name | Ark | Race | Human |
| Alignment | | Good +300 | |
| Fame | 3075 (+500) | Level | 159 |
| Profession | | Dark Walker | |
| Title | | Cat Knight, Caretaker of All, Jackson's Hero, Caretaker of the Land | |
| Health | 2625 (+150) | Mana | 2,590 |
| Spiritual Power | 100 | Strength | 356 (+28) |
| Agility | 416 (+35) | Stamina | 486 (+20) |
| Wisdom | 55 (+10) | Intelligence | 499 |
| Luck | 56 | Flexibility | 4 (Raws say 4 but it must be an error) |
| Art of Communication | 46 | Affection | 89 (+10) |

| | | | |
|--|----|-----|--|
| Resilience | 20 | | |
| Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics | | 113 | |
| * Equipment item effects | | | |
| Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified. | | | |
| Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10% | | | |
| Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10 | | | |
| * <King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20 | | | |
| Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3 | | | |
| Improved Norad Boots (Shoes): Movement Speed + 15%, Evasion + 10% | | | |
| Veil of Fire (Mantle): Flame resistance + 50% | | | |
| Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available | | | |
| Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5% | | | |
| Mind's Eye (Ring): 'Mind's Eye' enabled | | | |
| Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds | | | |
| Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5% | | | |
| * 40% increase all skills in the dark. | | | |
| * You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat) | | | |
| * Resistance Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%. | | | |
| * You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools. | | | |
| * Shock absorption is increased by 20%. | | | |

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

It was always enjoyable to check the information window after getting something. But he never imagined that he would have cold water poured on his mood. Ark put everything in order and left the cabin. Then a member of the vigilante crew that was recently hired came rushing up.

"Ark hyung-nim, you were at home. I was looking for you outside for a while."

"Me? Why?"

"A foreigner is looking for you at the village entrance."

"Foreigner? Does he seem like a merchant?"

"Yes, he was a merchant. He definitely told me that."

'Sid! Has he finally come?'

I wonder how much money he made to only return after one month? Ark became expectant and quickly ran to the village entrance. However, when he arrived it was a different merchant. A dapper looking merchant approached Ark.

"Are you Ark?"

"Yes I am, why? Who are you?"

"I am Nein. I was asked to deliver a letter from someone called Sid some time ago. But I had something to do so I was a little bit late."

"From Sid-nim?"

Ark read the letter than Nein gave him.

Ark-nim, I'm in prison so I can't write all the details. Anyway there was an unfair situation and now I'm stuck in the dungeons of the Cathedral. The situation is more serious than I thought so please quickly get me out of here!

Seeing Ark's bewildered expression, Nein added.

"I don't understand it either but it looks like a pretty serious matter. Normally when imprisoned in the cathedral dungeon a reasonable bail is set but with Sid, they won't even accept a bail."

‘What is this unbelievable thing I hearing?’

Was there a problem with all the money invested?

“When you meet Sid, tell him not to forget about the payment.”

Nein left the village after he finished. But Nein’s words didn’t enter Ark’s ears. He wanted to immediately fly to Selebrid. Ark quickly rushed to the training camp and found Roco.

“Rocco, I need to urgently get to Selebrid. I need your unicorn!”

“Yes?” What has happened all of a sudden?”

“Well I think something really bad has happened to Sid.”

“What? Sid?”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were also surprised and raised their bodies. They had also left their entire fortune with Sid. Of course, their viewpoint was different from Ark’s.

They had money unlike Ark who was poor in reality. From the beginning they were equipped with rich funds. However, JusticeMan had prohibited them from spending by saying ‘If you have money then you won’t be properly educated’ so they entrusted their fortunes to Sid.

“What the hell is going on?”

“I’m not sure yet. Once I get there then I’ll find out more. After I learn then I’ll contact you.”

“But the unicorn will not give a ride to Oppa.....”

“I have to at least try once.”

Roco anxiously called out the unicorn. After Roco requested it, the unicorn just snorted and shook its head. Although it didn’t mind women or children, it would not tolerate him it seemed to say.

“I’ll try.”

Ark pushed past Roco and came forward. Ark stared at the unicorn as he took out a dish and ate it. It was a dish that made his voice louder, and Hae Gyeol-sa had

already used it to influence his Intimidation skill. Ark stared at the unicorn and continued threatening it silently while eating.

“You stupid horse. I might have let it go before but not his time. If you continue then I’ll peel off all your leather and cook your meat. No, did you want me to beep-beep? Or how about beep-beep? Do you think I’m not able to?”

Apart from the unicorn, even Roco and the rehabilitation members paled at his uncouth curses. It was something he normally wouldn’t do. Once Ark began then he couldn’t seem to stop. After learning the Intimidation skill, his curses and threatening power exceeded Hae Gyeol-sa’s. No, that was not a threat. He was concerned about losing 5,500 gold. Ark would do anything for money, even risk his life. He really would cut off the horn and peel the leather. Ark’s intimidation exerted its maximum power thanks to his obsession with money.

“U-unicorn, O-oppa has made a request.....do you give permission.....?”

“Hi, Hihihing.”

The unicorn trembled and nodded. The Unicorn was a monster. But it swore allegiance to Roco and became an NPC. Thanks to that, the intimidation skill worked by 50%. As expected, it was a useful skill to learn. Although he succeeded with the intimidation, he couldn’t ride it without the owner. In the end, Roco and Ark rode the unicorn to Selebrid.

Hae Gyeol-sa looked proudly at the figures in the distance.

“Heh, I don’t have anything to teach anymore.

“It was you?”

Thwack! A thick hand hit the back of Hae Gyeol-sa’s head. When he turned around he saw that JusticeMan was glaring at him.

“You were the one that taught Ark all that abusive language?

“Huk, that.....Ark begged me to teach him.....”

“So you would teach every beggar that asked?”

JusticeMan’s eyes flashed. The intimidation skill couldn’t even compare to that look in his eyes.

Act 5: It is War!

“Whew, Oppa, I’m going now. I’m late for my part time job.”

“Okay, I understand. Go and I’ll take care of the rest.”

Going straight from Lancel to Selebrid would normally take 4 days. That was 32 hours in reality. However, his movement speed increased by 1000% thanks to the unicorn. They could also ignore the monster’s attack. But was that all? When the speed fell even a little bit, Ark would threaten it and the unicorn would run like a wild boar was chasing it. Thanks to that, Ark only took 3 hours to arrive in Selebrid.

“Pururuk, puruk, purururuk!”

Once Roco disconnected, the unicorn stared at Ark before leaving. Once he threatened the horn, his intimacy with the unicorn plummeted to the very bottom. But Ark didn’t pay any regard to the childish horse. Ark immediately searched for the cathedral.

“Stop, what do you want?”

Two guards blocked the access to the dungeon.

“I would like to make a brief visit to someone trapped in the dungeon.”

“Visit? With whom?”

“Sid.....I received a message that he was locked up here.”

“Sid.....”

The guard frowned as he rummaged through the ledger.

“This fellow’s crime was very bad. I received special instructions from the bishop not to allow anyone to visit. Go back.”

‘It appears to be very serious!’

After listening to the guard’s words, Ark’s worry was rekindled. New world was a game. Even if a serious crime was committed, the NPCs wouldn’t lock up the user for more than a few days. If they were incarcerated in jail then of course they couldn’t play the game. But he had been locked up for how many days and denied bail, now even visitation rights were prohibited? If it was an NPC then freedom was

never guaranteed but such cases were rare. The system might release him of course, but Ark couldn't afford to wait for that to happen.

'What on earth did he do?'

"Please look into the circumstances. It should only take a short time."

Ark took out 2 silver and asked about the circumstances.

"You dare to ask such a thing? For only 2 silver? Are you joking?"

'Damn, was the amount too small?'

He has 5,500 gold taken away so now 2 silver was all he wanted to part with.....even in urgent situations he always remembered to use the lowest possible price. However, they wouldn't budge for 2 silver. He also couldn't use his intimidation skill on the guards. It was very unlikely that such skills would work on the guards. Besides, he wouldn't be allowed close again if it failed.

'Since I invested gold into extending my cabin, I only have 5 gold left.'

Ark retreated for the moment while thinking. And he racked his mind in a dark alley.

'With that atmosphere, even bribing with 5 gold is unlikely to work. I should look for some other ways.....if I want to enter the jail secretly then I have no choice but to use Stealth. But.....'

If he used 'Stealth' to get past an NPC and was discovered then the penalty would be equal to being caught using the [Lie] scroll. He would become chaotic for a certain period of time and his intimacy would decrease.

'But since the circumstances are like this then I have to take the risk. However, if I use 'Stealth' when the guards were at the door then there is a 100% chance of being caught.'

That was the problem. The guards blocked the door completely so there was no space for one person to slip past. Of course, if he made contact while using 'Stealth' then he was a 100% chance of being detected.

'Is there a way to remove the guards from the door for a moment?'

Ark worried about it until he came up with a brilliant idea.

“Ugh!”

There was a sudden scream in the dim evening. The relaxed guards flinched and turned their gazes. At the same time a boy ran out of an alley dripping blood.

“H-help me!”

“What is going on here? Why are you bleeding?”

“A demon, a demon is coming!”

“Demon?”

The guards didn’t know the situation and when they turned their heads to where the boy pointed, they flinched. Something leisurely emerged from the alley the boy had ran from. A monster made of bones holding a shield and sword! It was a skeleton. However after it saw the guards, the skeleton quickly fled to the alley.

“Huk, eh, how come there is a skeleton in Selebrid.....?”

“The wicked summoner called it here!”

“Summoner?”

“Yes, I was just walking along when he suddenly appeared. Since I’m too pretty his intention was clearly to kidnap me. But I was smarter and suspected as soon as I saw him and ran away. Then he summoned that demon to kill me!”

“Pretty? Smarter?”

At the boy’s words, the guards muttered with a strange expression. Then the boy yelled and shook the guards.

“That’s not important right now!”

“Oh, yes. How dare someone try to kidnap and murder you in Selebrid.....!”

“You have to catch the skeleton and summoner right now.”

“But shouldn’t it be empty?”

"Ugh, is ajusshi stupid? Since the skeleton ran away, the summoner will soon get away as well!"

The boy shouted as if he was dying.

"Yes I see. Do you know where the summoner is?"

"Yes, he was just behind me in the alley."

"Fortunately it's not far away. Okay. Lead the way!"

With their sense of justice overflowing, the guards ran to the alley. And after a moment, a blurry shape went through the door that they had been blocking.

'Jeez that Dedric. Isn't he normally mean and vicious?'

The person who entered the prison was none other than Ark. Of course the boy was Dedric and the skeleton was Deimos. They put on that play in order to get the guards away from the door. He didn't have to worry about Deimos since he was recalled early on. And Dedric.....he was a cunning fellow so he would finish it well.

'It is possible to use my summons in such a way. I should utilize it more often.'

However, it wasn't over once he entered the jail. Since there were guards in the prison, it wasn't easy for him to relax. Ark maintained his 'stealth' status and explored the dungeon. After avoiding the guards and exploring the dungeon, he finally saw a familiar face in a corner. The person sitting with a soulless expression was the hobbit Sid. Ark approached and muttered in a low voice.

"Sid-nim, Sid-nim."

After he called a couple of times, Sid raised his head. His eyes were fat and swollen from crying. Sid looked around with swollen eyes before sighing and looking down again. Since Ark was using 'stealth' he couldn't be found.

"Sid-nim, it's me. Ark."

"Ah, Ark?" Ark-nim?"

Sid approached the grate.

"I'm using 'Stealth' right now. So lower your voice."

"What the? Why is it so noisy?"

At that time a guard that was patrolling turned his head. But he didn't see anything at the grate so he shook his head and turned the corner. Sid blew a sigh of relief and once again came to the grate. Then he murmured with a tearful voice.

"Huk.....Ark-nim, you've come."

How could he say that? Since Sid had his 5,500 gold, why wouldn't he come? Anger welled inside Ark but he firmly pushed it down. While he wanted to berate him for 4 days and 3 nights, there was no time. The duration of 'Stealth' was only 20 minutes. 5 minutes had already gone by so he had 10 minutes left before he had to leave.

"There is no time so speak clearly. What on earth happened?"

"I was tricked."

"Tricked? By who?"

Sid sighed and explained what happened. Due to circumstances he had to move to the border of Nagaran. He sold chaotic scrolls and protection scrolls and made a lot of money.....

"The atmosphere was really good. I thought that I could double the capital."

Ark nodded. Ark would've also used that method to engage in business. The method to barter scrolls for consumables wasn't bad. It was common sense since someone could raise the price and gain even more profit. That's why he thought it was good to leave selling in Sid's hands. But he became furious after listening to Sid's words.

"After I exchanged the scrolls for consumables, I headed to Nagaran. There I luckily met a user who was in charge of a fairly large guild. And I was asked to deliver the materials to a camp on the outskirts of Nagaran."

"Why did you enter Nagaran with all that luggage?"

Ark's voice became cold and Sid immediately shrunk away and made excuses.

"Uh, you can't use scrolls inside Nagaran. I also hired NPC mercenaries so I thought it would be okay to head to the outskirts. The warrior also offered to escort me."

".....So?"

"My first few transactions were okay. But when the third trade was occurring, the guild had to urgently move the camp. So they asked me to procure the necessary materials for them. Since it was an urgent matter, they would increase the price."

“.....So?”

Although the outcome was obviously, Ark stayed patient.

“But when I entered carrying the required materials, masked thieves showed up. There were a lot of them and they were also high levelled.....the NPC mercenaries were instantly killed.....”

“Were the items lost?”

“No. I didn’t drop any items. Nagaran is a PK free area so the probability that an item would drop was extremely low. But I was resurrected in Selebrid with those guys blocking me. Because I was late and broke the contract, the violation set by the contract was money.....”

“How much?”

“3, 000 gold.....”

It was like a thunderbolt had instantly struck his head.

3, 000 Gold! 3, 000 gold! Since Ark had a 58% share, 1740 gold was from Ark. That hobbit had lost him 1,740 gold, which he could’ve used to buy 8,700 kimbap. He went through a variety of emotions from shock, feeling like he was going to collapse, disappointment and then murderous. Ark wanted to enter the prison and strangle him. But the prison bars blocked him. When Ark started breathing heavily, Sid quickly continued talking.

“B-but you only lost 500 gold from the principal amount.

“Only 500 gold? Why are you talking shit like that? Aren’t you a merchant? What else is there aside from the principal? The principal amount came from my hands. Sid you will pay the principal amount and the 3000 gold!”

At the end of Ark’s words, Sid’s complexion became pale.

“What the hell? Why are you yelling at yourself? Are you crazy?”

Then, the annoyed voice of a guard was heard. Ark and Sid closed their mouths for a moment. After the short silence, Sid’s expression became sulky. However, Sid might’ve died from a heart attack if Ark hadn’t been using ‘Stealth.’ An evil spirit! Ark’s face while glaring at Sid definitely looked like an evil spirit. In his mind, he really wanted to discard a hand like this. No, he should break it a little bit but not discard it. 3,000 gold. It wasn’t a fact that could be forgiven. Even if he had to use

Hae Gyeol-sa, he would extract it all from Sid. To do that, he had to remove Sid from the prison.

".....I understand the situation for the moment. But why on earth are you imprisoned in jail? Since you still have the principal amount of money left, you could pay off the breach of contract and I also heard from Nein that you weren't allowed a bail.....

"It's because of that!"

Sid punched his fists together in resentment.

"I was tricked from the beginning!"

"Tricked?"

"Yes, when I was attacked by the thieves I accidentally saw the symbol that was engraved on their clothes. It was covered by a cloak but I clearly saw it. I saw it at the guild camp as it is the symbol of the guild that traded with me."

After Sid's description, all the circumstances became clear in Ark's mind. Those guys were making fun of Sid from the beginning. There were few merchants who didn't like money. However, it was easy to persuade and trick naive merchants. After winning their trust, they would make the naive merchant sign a huge collateral contract and then stab them in the back. They aimed for a scam from the beginning! Sid then continued talking.

"It's an obvious scam. But the Merchant Guild is the one that is supposed to have jurisdiction to pass judgement. Although I tried to plead with the cathedral, the situation was the same."

It was true that the whole thing was written on the contract. On the other hand, there was no way to prove that the robbers were a member of the contracted guild. Even if the situation had happened in real life, there was no way for the police to intervene. But for Sid it was a matter of life or death.

'If I leave it like this then Ark-nim will kill me!'

Sid was determined and began to protest even through his embarrassment. Day and night, he ran around the cathedral actively appealing to senior NPCs to their chagrin. He called for a fair investigation and a punishment for the guild leader.....After holding signs and demonstrating for several days, he was suddenly captured by guards and imprisoned in the dungeon.

"Huk huk huk, the leader of 'Dawn Blade' accused me of libel. I tried to explain the situation but it was no use. He was a leader and a lord. So what rights did I have? Huk huk huk, do people without any power have to suffer like this in the game? It's not fair. But no one even listened to my words.....So I had to ask for help from Ark."

"Wait, what?"

Ark approached the bars closely.

"Dawn Blade? That person was the leader of that guild.....?"

"He was the Holy Knight Alan. I didn't understand until later but he is a fairly well known user. He also appeared on TV. So I was relieved.....a guy like that.....I didn't think that he would trick a person like me for money....."

After Ark heard Sid's words, he became deep in thought. Organizing a guild required considerable amounts of money. Well, it would probably be more than 3,000 gold. And since the guild was famous, if news of a scam was spread then the guild's public reputation would be harmed. But such a large guild actually went to Nagaran and carried out a scam. Why? However, Sid's next words answered his question.

"Did Sid-nim say that the money was from investments?"

"Yes, but why?"

Ark's face stiffened as the last question was solved. Since Sid didn't participate in the Event Quest, he didn't know about the relationship between Ark and Alan. On the other hand, Alan? Of course, he didn't know about Sid's relationship to Ark. But what if Andel had been there? Andel would remember Sid's face from Cairo. That's right. It wasn't Sid or money that triggered Alan's scheme. It was Ark!

'Son of a bitch.....it was because of their grudge towards me.....!'

Ark ground his teeth together.

"I understand. I'll check it out more so just hang on for a while."

"Ah, Ark-nim. Will you be able to get me out?"

"You have to get out. Because your body has to pay off the 3000 gold."

Sid's face paled even more at his cold words. He blinked in chagrin. Money was a dreadful obsession for Ark! The hobbit's real suffering would start when he got out

of the prison. Even if Sid escaped from the wolf's mouth, he was forced to enter the tiger's.

'My future game life.....'

Sid's tears were flowing at the thought of his future.

Ark used the same tactics to leave the dungeon. After talking with Sid it was clear what he had to do. Alan was a Holy Knight. Ark as a Dark Walker was supported by the beast clans, however Alan had a significant support base with the Cathedral. He had a lot of status to be able to have Sid captured for an ambiguous crime like defamation and to not even get bail. In addition, there was the Cathedral.....the fact that Alan and the Cathedral had a close relationship was something Ark had to consider.

'Alan.....why couldn't he just leave it alone?'

Since Andel had appeared with the assassins, he was able to guess what had happened. Andel lost in PK and couldn't have hired the assassins from the Dark Brother organization alone. Without a doubt there was someone backing him. And the person behind Andel was probably Alan.

'I don't have to pay any attention to Andel. Alan is my opponent.'

Currently, Alan had a considerable power with the lords and he also occupied Silvana castle. In other words, he had to completely smash Alan in order to rescue Sid and get back his 5000 gold. And if he found evidence of the scam then he would be able to get back his 3000 gold. He had to settle things with Alan once and for all. If he just stepped on him without making things clear than the same situation would happen again. And since it was a fight then he had to win using any method.

'Alan, I'll say this once. You've touched the wrong opponent.'

Fire burned in Ark's eyes.

'But it doesn't just depend on my motivation. Alan is powerful. While taking on Alan I can't overlook the people in the 'Dawn Blade' guild or the Cathedral. Moreover, Alan now occupies a castle.....I don't stand a chance if I use foolish guerrilla warfare. A head on confrontation is inevitable. I need to be prepared. I need to collect information about Nagaran.'

In New World, Alan had built up a lot of friendships with senior NPCs and even commanded lots of users. However, Ark wasn't being idle in that time!

‘Since it’s come to this, I have to rally everything. Yes, this is war!’

Alan had taken 3000 gold while Sid had 5000 gold confiscated. It was 8,000 gold at stake. No matter what he had to recover that money. The question was how. Ark became resolute and left the game unit.

“What the? That rascal Alan?”

Gwon Hwa-rang shouted. After leaving the unit, Hyun-woo had immediately called him to tell him the situation. In reality, JusticeMan also believed in justice so his anger was incredible.

“That child dared to do that.....”

“I don’t need to tell you why Alan targeted Sid.”

“I can guess.”

Gwon Hwa-rang growled as he replied.

“He knew that Sid managed our money and did such a thing. We won’t stop until he dies. So, have you thought about how to deal with him?”

“Do you want to try to reason with him?”

“Are you joking?”

“Then there is only one method. War!”

“That’s how it should be Ark.”

Gwon Hwa-rang laughed. However, Hyun-woo voiced sounded heavy over the phone.

“But it’s not an easy problem. Alan was briefly shown on TV the other day. He is also the leader of the ‘Dawn Blade’ guild that has occupied a castle. Of course, the number and level of people in the guild is also significant. Well, I would be able to figure out a way somehow but the problem is money. Since we’ll be fighting a war in Nagaran, we’re going to need quite a lot of consumables.”

“War is originally a consumption competition.”

It was an unavoidable law that war was a consumption competition. New World also followed that rule. Hundreds gathered on the battlefield. Of course, the necessary supplies were incredible. They couldn't fight the opponents without drinking potions like water. Therefore a colossal amount of money would be spent on potions. In a sense, it was more important than levels or equipment. Unless it was a 1-on-1 fight, the more economical and durable side would win.

Alan was very rich in funds since his force overtook the other guilds and occupied the castle. He didn't know if he would be able to mobilize that much in the fight against Alan. There was nothing Ark could do about that part. Then, he heard Bulkkun shouting from far away.

“You don't have to worry because we'll take care of that part!”

“That rascal, he dared to touch the nose of a sleeping lion? Originally we considered the game as a form of training.....but this is a matter of pride. Money? Ha, that fellow has money? Hyung-nim, while we promised not to do more than necessary, this time is an exception.”

Jjak-tung also made a face and looked at JusticeMan.

“.....We can't not do it. Because this is not related to the game but is simply retaliation.”

“Okay. Hyung-nim gives permission. Hey, you guys prepare some cash for tomorrow. I'll show them clearly what money is.”

“I understand. Is 10 million won enough?”

The rehabilitation members were people who have lived their lives with pride. However, a little child was hitting the back of their heads. Therefore, the rehabilitation group's eyes were completely open and they couldn't see anything else. They went home and grabbed some documents.

“I got it. The funds have been secured. However the troops.....even though we have the thieves, isn't the level of Alan's guild quite high? It isn't possible to just fill our head count with low level guys.....there are only 30 high level thieves.”

“I have an idea for that.”

Hyun-woo explained the method that he had already imagined.

"Hrm, it might work."

"If it goes as I expect then it should work. I'll head there while ajusshi should take care of Lancel Village."

"I understand. Good luck."

The next day, a storm struck the auction site. 10 users logged in as guests without any IDs and stockpiled various items. They purchased various level 100 weapons and armours and well as consumption items like crazy. Thanks to inflation, the prices quickly rose from 2 million won to 4 million won. The auction site was accessed thousands of times a day. In just a few hours, those 10 people made the prices skyrocket. Without caring about the market price, they just blindly bought items. A special price range was systematically formed and spread in their wake.

"What the hell, who are these people?"

"Don't they know the market price? Are they just buying blindly?"

"Damn, the price of another item has suddenly skyrocketed."

"Ugh, I was about to buy that item....."

The users visiting the auction site were stunned. But the cash storm was over in just a few hours. They suddenly appeared and bought dozens of items at random before disappearing. All that remained of the storm that hit the auction site was a bunch of inflated prices. The aftermath was challenging because it would take a few days before it would return to its original state.

"What the hell. Those people?"

"Siege!"

"That's right, clearly those people are preparing for a siege."

"But if they're preparing for a siege then why did they only buy level 100 items?"

".....Indeed, shouldn't they be at least level 130?"

"But what would be the alternative reason....."

After all no one could figure out their identity. In the end, what happened in the three hours at the auction site became a legend.....

"Huhuhu, the quality is as good as expected."

Jjak-tung smirked as he organized the newly acquired items. To be honest, he had wanted to obtain equipment using money immediately. They were already deeply immersed in New World. But JusticeMan's rule was 'it is necessary to obtain it yourself' and banned the use of real money. In addition, conservative Roco also disagreed.

"The quality is more horrifying than gambling. If you use it just once then you won't be able to stop."

However, even JusticeMan and Roco changed their minds in this situation. The gold they lost wasn't the problem. Their pent-up anger broke over Ark losing his money. They knew better than anyone why Ark was obsessed with money.

"That kind of money.....the money that Alan stole is for Park So-mi's hospital bills.....!"

"How many times has Ark Oppa slept with an empty stomach to save money.....!"

"I'll beat that kind of guy with the hammer of justice! But with my current strength I can't uphold my principles.....Park So-mi's hospital charges.....If Ark doesn't receive that money then he'll have to go begging! This time is the exception. Just this once, I'll allow it for 3 hours."

If Alan was going to steal the money for the hospital bills then he was going to kill him.

"This is for Park So-mi.....No, it is a crusade for justice! It isn't necessary to worry about the means!"

"Yes, for my future mother in law.....No, it is a crusade for justice!"

There was no way the rehabilitation members would miss this chance. As soon as they got the cash they headed straight to the auction site!

"There is no time to relax. Before Hyung-nim changes his mind, we need to buy all the necessary items!"

"Hahaha, this is not a joke? This is the warmth of shopping for luxury items."

"Yes, I see a potion that is available to buy."

"Good. Because this is for justice and our little brother!"

"Of course."

"He is just an ignorant guy. Hyung-nim will educate him."

"Ha? This guy put 500,000 won here? There is no time so I'll bet 1 million won!"

The rehabilitation members became irrational and created a legend in those 3 hours. But thanks to that, they were able to obtain the finest equipment. Since they poured money into it their defense, attack and various stats increased dramatically. The equipment was enough for them to crush users 20~30 levels above them! Alan's provocation ended up making the rehabilitation group stronger.

"Okay, I have the necessary equipment so now it is time to gather the troops!"

JusticeMan immediately summoned the thieves at the training camp. They numbered 300 people! But he couldn't take all of them. During that time, they continuously trained and hunted so their levels rose tremendously. But since they were already avoiding the eyes of the Dark Brother organization, it would be a waste to use potions on low-level thieves. JusticeMan selected Wangnuni and the best 30 people. The problem was how to make them participate.....

"Ark-oppa is in a crisis. Please help!"

The situation was resolved with just those words.

“Ark hyung-nim found a new home for use!”

“Oh, now it’s a chance to repay the favour!”

“Let’s go!”

So he secured 30 people just like that. But that wasn’t enough. It was a large scale battle and it might even become a siege. Aside from numbers, they also needed the appropriate troop configuration. But Ark had already made a rough summary of the configuration. JusticeMan also agreed when he was told. JusticeMan explained the situation to the residents in Lancel Village.

“Ark is in a crisis?”

Hassan pulled his beard and tightened his stomach.

“A Meow never forgets the favour it once received. If our friend the Truthseeker is in a crisis then of course I have to run and help. Okay while I have to protect the village, I can send 10 Meow warriors. Hired mercenaries can’t even be compared to them.”

“We’ll help.”

It was the raccoon clan representatives.

“Ark saved our clan. Since he planted Yggdrasil here we want to return the favour. Although we won’t be able to fight, we can help in other ways.”

Although they were better craftsmen than fighters, their levels were over 100. In addition, they had various techniques that exerted a lot of power on warriors.

“Thank you all!”

JusticeMan accepted the raccoon clan as well as the 10 Meow warriors. But the real problem was from now on.

“Thieves and Meow warriors. Depending on their use, the raccoons could be better than regular NPC mercenaries. Since there is a high degree of intimacy then they will follow commands well. But they still lack a collective combat experience. The combat troops need people familiar with a strategy against guilds!”

JusticeMan sighed with anxious eyes.

‘Ark must succeed as well.....’

At that time, Ark got off a carriage that arrived at Jackson castle.

"Ark, it has been too long!"

The young Lord gladly stood up and greeted Ark.

"What brings you here so suddenly?"

"I came because I wanted to ask a favour from you."

Ark sighed and explained the entire situation. The young Lord was silent for a while before sighing.

"You've experienced a difficult thing. So what do you need me for?"

"There are two things. One is to ask My Lord to use your power and investigate the case properly."

"Since the Cathedral is involved I can't guarantee anything, but I will try. The second thing is?"

Ark gulped and said in a low voice.

"Soldiers.....can I borrow them?"

"Is that it?"

The young Lord looked serious as he nodded.

"I understand the situation. Sir Alan.....Yes, the Cathedral would get involved to protect his reputation. But the world will not just blindly believe your words. You've gained my trust. And Alan does deserve punishment for his crimes. But....."

"Does the Cathedral weigh on your mind?"

"Of course it would weigh on my mind."

The young Lord turned to Ark and said firmly.

"Ark, I think very highly of you."

"I know."

"I want to help you. This is serious. In addition, the hearts of the soldiers are also with you. The Cathedral is a problem. But no matter what, I can't oppose the royal family."

"You're talking about the rules of Nagaran."

"Yes, the Three Powers have no influence in Nagaran. Therefore, the entrance of soldiers is prohibited. If I break the rule then it would be considered a revolt against the Schudenberg royal family, and the Bristania and Sinius Kingdoms would consider it a declaration of war. The problem isn't something that a mere Lord like me can solve."

"That's right."

Ark had also gathered such information in Selebrid about Nagaran. Still, he had been wondering if there was another way. But the results were as expected.....the same laws that applied to medieval times also applied to New World. There was no way a Lord would defy the laws of the nation for a mere foreigner.

"I'm sorry."

Ark instinctively knew that being stubborn wouldn't work.

"It's not possible. I have no choice but to fill the headcount with the thieves, even if the overall abilities would decrease."

"Instead I'll try to figure out as much as possible about that incident."

"Thank you. I apologize for the inconvenience."

Ark nodded as he prepared to leave. Just as he was leaving, the young Lord said.

"Ark, are you convinced that Alan orchestrated this incident?"

".....Yes."

"I see. Ah! Thanks to that issue I forgot to warmly welcome you. I'm sorry, but in order to avoid the gazes of other people please leave through the back entrance."

Ark was secretly disappointed at the young Lord's sober tone.

However, when he left through the back door he was soon able to understand the attitude of the Lord.

“Ark!”

“Sir Cross?”

Ark looked at the approaching people with surprised eyes. It was Sir Cross, 4 guards and 15 people from the Sylphid Knights. They surrounded Ark and muttered in an upset tone.

“This person, were you really going to leave without seeing us?”

“I’m really sorry. There is urgent work that needed to be finished.....”

“Really? Then we’ll go with you.”

“Yes?”

“Hah, this is really amazing.....in fact, the Young Lord just dismissed us. Thanks to that we’re unemployed. Well, we’ll probably be reinstated in the near future but at the moment we need to find a way to eat. If it’s possible then can you hire us? We don’t require a lot of rewards.”

Sir Cross and the soldiers laughed as they hit the backpacks they were carrying.

‘Dismissal?’

Ark suddenly raised his head. The young Lord was looking at Ark from the second floor balcony above the back entrance. His friendly face was different from before. The young Lord didn’t say anything, he just shook his finger and grinned. He didn’t need any words. His face explained it all. Sir Cross murmured in a subtle voice.

“This is the young Lord’s message. I called you Jackson’s Hero. And the hero shouldn’t receive that kind of hospitality. Well, I don’t know what he is implying with those words.”

Jackson’s Hero, the title that Ark forgot about! But the young Lord had remembered.

‘Yes, so far my choices haven’t been wrong!’

Tears gathered. Ark trusted NPCs more than users. They had never betrayed him when he gave them his trust. Although it might cause difficulty, he never regretted it. His trust was rewarded. Even though he received the title of Jackson’s Hero, the young Lord’s decision wasn’t an easy one. Ark bowed towards the 2nd floor balcony.

Now the preparation for war was over.

Ark, JusticeMan, Roco and the rehabilitation members were carrying advanced equipment. The total was 13 people. There were 30 reformed thieves, 10 Meow warriors, 10 raccoon clan craftsmen and 20 unemployed soldiers. The result was that an unprecedented group consisting of 80% NPCs was formed. Ark and JusticeMan was ready to attack!

'I have collected everything from my time in New World. If this attack doesn't challenge Alan then I would've been stepped on twice!'

"Let's go, to Nagaran!"

Act 6: Shrine of War

Schudenberg Kingdom, Bristania Kingdom, Sinus Principality.....some time ago, the rulers of the Three Kingdom fought over the supremacy of the continent using the War of the Shrines. The disturbing incident was reported in many places.

And there were also the ominous predictions from shrine priests.....in recent years, the political situation became messier and caused a lot of issues. The kings began to feel anxious and eventually agreed to the Armistice Agreement over the border dispute. The agreement was rapidly made. But some problems occurred in the final stage. The influence of the Three Kingdoms in the Nagaran war was almost equal. Since it was a push and pull battle, it was hard to distinguish the borders.

That caused problems with the Armistice Agreement. They all wanted to expand their territories even further. They naturally asserted their rights and argued.

"That territory is ours. Didn't we capture that castle a long time ago?"

"Bah, you're just trying to plunder it using a lousy method."

"Please refrain from saying that. Do you really want to continue the war for such a petty reason?"

The Schudenberg and Bristania Kingdom were loudly arguing while the Sinus Principality just sat quietly in the middle.

"Do you know how much we invested in that territory?"

"The territory is more about the people than the money. Didn't half of the residents from that territory immigrate to my kingdom?"

“Be quiet! The important thing is who occupied the castle in the end.”

“If you put it like that then my troops were the ones who expanded the territory. If the battle continued then of course I would’ve taken over.”

“What? Are you insulting the honourable soldiers of the Bristania Kingdom? Did you want to try it?”

“No problem!”

The low level argument continued as the candles started to burn down. At that time, the Archbishop who was the mediator for the war talks suggested.

“Then how about all Three Kingdoms jointly manage the Nagaran territory.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“There’s an old saying. The sovereign reigns but does not dominate.”

“The sovereign reigns but does not dominate?”

The kings looked at him with eyes that asked what he was talking about.

“Is there a reason that your Majesties covet that territory?”

“When a territory is expanded, it brings peace and well-being to the residents.....”

“This is the reason?”

The Archbishop smiled and briefly summarized.

“Isn’t it because of the tax obtained from the territory?”

“Hehehe, well. That is also important.”

They all blushed and coughed as their reason was explicitly pointed out. The reason that the kings desired the territory was indeed money! In fact, the kings were only focused on making money from the territory. Once they occupied a castle, it was possible to request a monthly tax from it. Taxes are responsible for the finances of the kingdom.....it was also an enormous help in funding the war between kingdoms. It was a cycle of them receiving the funds and using it to fund the war, capturing more castles and gaining even more money.

“If that’s the case, then this map isn’t needed.”

The Archbishop put the map away and stood up.

“Let me clarify the key points. The important thing isn’t permanently ruling the castles in Nagaran. It is for the money to enter Your Majesties pockets. Of course, you would be offended if you received less than the others. The heart of these talks is to divide it fairly so that everyone can be satisfied. If so, the solution is very simple. Although you will rule the area, you won’t dominate it.”

“.....I don’t understand so can you please explain it more easily?”

“The conclusion I was trying to reach is to open up Nagaran to the foreigners.”

“Foreigners?”

“Yes, the foreigners don’t really belong to any royal families. Although they follow the rules of the nation, they can’t really be called residents. We will give them the chance to rule a castle in Nagaran. Then they will have to pay a tax that the Three Kingdoms will share.”

“Hoo.....”

A King began to show interest.

“I don’t need to explain how diligent the foreigners are. To them there is no night or day. One foreign merchant once spent 3 days and nights setting up a shop. They’ll work both day and night once they’ve captured a castle. Your Majesties purses would become thicker even faster.”

The Archbishop explained with a satisfied look.

“And once the foreigners occupy a castle, the soldiers will be able to relieve their nerves. After the long war the soldiers’ nerves are sharp and there are risks that a minor emotional fight will cause the war to spill over.”

“Indeed.....!”

One king burst out with admiration. Thanks to the Archbishop’s proposal, all the arguments were solved. They didn’t need to compromise and their pride also wasn’t hurt. Once the territory develops more, the income will become larger so there was no reason for their stomach to hurt. Because Nagaran had 12 castles, the income could be divided into 3 fairly. They also didn’t need to invest large amounts of money to restore Nagaran, an area that had become impoverished from the many years of war. At that time, the King of the Sinus Principality looked worried and opened his mouth.

"But the foreigners sometimes go too far."

"Um, that's right. I don't know how honourably they will fight."

"If the war is opened to the public, I'm afraid Nagaran will become even more impoverished."

"Then wouldn't rules be necessary?"

The Archbishop spread out a thick parchment. Using a pen he wrote down the special laws for Nagaran.

"This much should be enough. If we do any more then it will give the feeling of excessive interference."

"It's not bad"

"Okay. I'll follow you to the end in this matter."

The kings became satisfied and signed the Armistice Agreement. And the news was announced to the entire continent a few days later. Episode II: <Pioneering Age of the Foreigners> had begun. The Nagaran area was composed of 12 estates. It was opened to all foreigners. Although originally NPCs fought there, it was now a battlefield for all users.

You have entered the Nagaran area.

The special laws that the kings of the Three Kingdoms jointly signed are applied.

* Use of scrolls has been sealed.

* Killing a player does not affect the alignment. The same effect applied to NPCs belonging to a player. However, if you attack an NPC with a neutral alignment then a heavy penalty will be charged. In addition, resurrecting after dying has the same experience and stat penalty as the other regions.

* Groups who register will be able to participate in siege warfare.

* You cannot update your resurrection place to Nagaran. However, a castle that is occupied by a guild and its allies will be able to turn it into a base. This will be cancelled if the castle is taken away.

"From here it is Nagaran....."

Ark looked at the plains stretching out in front of him. The area looked exactly the same as other areas, but once he crossed an invisible border than a warning message popped up indicating that it was a dangerous area. When he ignored it and continued forward, the above message immediately showed. He had entered Nagaran where even murder was permitted.

“Ark, the departure preparations are finished.”

Cross approached with a face that was still sleepy. That was the hardest part of travelling with NPCs.

For a user, one day was three days in New World. Since their concept of time was different, a user could stay connected and hunt for three days. But for NPCs, three days was literally three days. Therefore they could not act the same as a user. Since they are people, when they don't sleep their stamina and strength would fall. If the NPC doesn't sleep for more than one day then a considerable penalty will be applied.

Vampires and the undead such as Dedric and Deimos don't have those limitations. Sometimes he thought interacting with NPCs was inconvenient. Of course, Ark wouldn't waste 2 hours. During that time, he wandered the camp finding general and magic ingredients.

‘I've collected enough food ingredients to create dishes that provide buffs.’

Ark looked warmly at the thick bags and rubbed it. Cross was tired and shook his head.

“You didn't sleep and stayed up all night digging herbs? I've thought this before, but your body really is made of iron. The other foreigners are similar but you are especially intense. I don't understand how you can go three days without any sleep.....it really is amazing.”

He hadn't slept for several days. Thanks to thoughts of thousands of gold flying away, he wasn't able to sleep.

“I move diligently since I don't want to fall behind other people.”

“You're correct. I should also learn from you.”

“There is still a large distance before we reach Silvana, our destination. I have to hurry to join JusticeMan ajusshi who left first.”

“I see. By the way, it's been a while since I've seen Teacher.”

Ark lead Cross and the soldiers across Nagaran. They managed to go over one hill. Then yelling and metal clashing was heard from the bottom of the hill.

“Attack the side!”

“For the glory of the Hawk Guild!”

“Ugh, this time I won’t back down!”

“The formation is collapsing. Use the mercenary troops!”

A cloud of dust was caused by the hundreds of people engaged in a fierce battle. Swords crossed paths while battle magic exploded! In such a battle, recovery potions were only used as first aid. If the formation collapsed and they became surrounded by enemies, in a blink of an eye they would lose all their health. 1~2 potions wouldn’t be enough to recover all their health. It was like pouring water into a bottomless pit! Even if they poured recovery potions down a funnel into the mouth, it wouldn’t be able to keep up with all the damage.

‘This is what they mean by a guild battle!’

Ark hid on the hill and sighed automatically as he watched. They recovered health using potions. But was that it? If they consumed items like they used skills, how much would they use? While Ark was watching, he calculated that the items used were worth approximately hundreds of gold. A war of attrition! Such battles were spread out all over Nagaran. He couldn’t even imagine how much money was flying around Nagaran in one day.

‘If you have more troops and fight more battles then the money involved would also increase.’

Ark opened his bag and sighed again. Although he was broke when he left Lancel Village, he now had 120 gold. This was thanks to the contract of the Three Pig Brothers who tried to attack Ark. It was an agreement to pay 40 gold every 10 days in reality. After one month he entered the Merchant’s Guild and was able to withdraw 120 gold.

120 gold.....it wasn’t a small amount. However, it was insufficient for waging a war. Fortunately the rehabilitation members prepared some funds, but that was also limited. If he spent the original amount of money then it would decrease. He had to avoid unnecessary fights in order to save money.

‘I have to stay clear until I find Alan. I don’t need a trivial misunderstanding to increase the number of enemies.’

“Summon Demon, Dedric!”

“Oh, is it a fight?”

Dedric looked around motivated after he was summoned. Because he hadn't fought after the battle against Colossus, quite a lot of stress had accumulated. Of course, relieving his pet's stress wasn't a reason he thought of when summoning them.

“No, it is the opposite. Please scout ahead and avoid any possible battles.”

“Sheesh, you called me just to do that?”

“You don't want to?”

After Ark showed the pot in his bag, Dedric became appalled and frantically shook his head.

“U-understood. I'm doing it. I can do it.”

Ark's choice was appropriate. It was the first time that he had entered a war zone. From where he was lying, he could see battles occurring everywhere.

‘There seems to be an overabundance of money everywhere.’

If money was a factor in battles then of course he wouldn't fight excessively. With every relationship, he considered the pros and cons to it. Since it was a war zone, he didn't know when he would be attacked be surprise. Since his forces were weak, it was smart to walk away from battles. Moreover, Ark still had to register to take part at the Shrine of War. He also only had 20 troops.

“Master, 40 foreigners are gathered down in that valley.”

“Okay, we'll go back and bypass the valley.”

Ark was busy avoiding the land mines throughout the evening until he finally arrived at Silvana. Silvana was surprisingly large. There was quite a large town with dozens of smaller ones situated at a reasonable distance and there were also quite a lot of residents.

‘Alan is in that place.....’

Ark looked at the giant grey castle that was situated in the centre. He became anxious once he confirmed that it was Silvana. Guilds with considerable funds, skills and personnel flocked to Nagaran.....yet Alan had defeated all those guilds and managed to capture one of the 12 castles. As the Lord, he would've built up a great

reputation and have lots of supporters. He didn't understand it that much, but he had already seen Alan in Jackson. Of course, Ark couldn't even be compared to when he was in Jackson. But that was strictly his personal views. Although he had piled up experience in the meanwhile, he didn't know if it would be enough to defeat Alan.

'But I still have to knock him down.'

If Alan kept his power than Ark wouldn't be able to undo Sid's life imprisonment. He would also completely lose his 5000 gold. Therefore he couldn't give up even if the odds were only 1%.

'I'll think about it more after I join up with JusticeMan ajusshi.'

When he arrived at the place he was told on the phone, simple tents had been erected. JusticeMan, who was supervising the raccoons who were moving things, ran happily towards him.

"You've arrived safely."

"Yes, I was a little late because I was avoiding other guilds."

"Yes, we did that too. This place is bloodier than I thought."

It was thanks to the Meow warriors that JusticeMan and his group were able to avoid being hurt. The Meow lived and hunted in the woods so they were outstanding warrior scouts. Cross made a welcome gesture as he approached JusticeMan.

"Teacher, it's been a while."

"You guys have come."

"Since it is Ark and Teacher, it isn't possible to pretend that I don't know."

Cross smiled and looked around the barracks.

"These are the comrades that will be fighting with us?"

"Yes, they haven't been introduced. They are the residents of Lancel Village."

"It's good to meet you. I am Cross."

JusticeMan introduced Cross to the Meow, the raccoons and the rest of the group. Meanwhile, Ark started organizing the configuration of the 83 people into attack

groups. The captain needed to have reputation and leadership. It was like he had hired mercenary NPCs. However Ark's troops were influenced by the degree of intimacy just like when he made the raccoon troops, and weren't like hired mercenaries. This was one of Ark's strong points.

He finished organizing the groups for attack and sat down with JusticeMan.

"Now let me sum up what has to be done."

When Ark opened his mouth, Bul-kkun immediately said.

"What do you have to organize? The children are gathered to attack."

"The situation is not so simple."

"Not simple?"

"The first problem is that the number of members in the Dawn Blade guild is more than we expected."

Ark said in a low voice.

"The Dawn Blade guild has 500 members."

"500?"

The rehabilitation members stiffened their jaws. Ark also breathed out a sigh. When Ark arrived in Selebrid, he researched the basic information about the Dawn Blade guild. Knowledge was power. If he knew more than he would be able to catch more opportunities. But that wasn't the case this time. Once he saw the information, he felt like the situation was even gloomier.

'I thought that the Dawn Blade would only have 100 people.'

Ark had not been interested in guilds thanks to other online games. But when he checked, he saw that a small guild in New World had over 200 people.

New World was a game that made the most money thanks to its commercialization. The game moved a lot of money so the organizations in it would also become big. In addition, the unity was incomparable to any other game. Of course there were limits to the guild personnel. Since fame was obtained from hunting or trading, there was no use in guild leadership. However, it was important for the guild master to have high fame. The fame of the leader could decide the reputation of the guild and would also allow them to hire the appropriate number of

NPC mercenaries. In New World, an average guild had 200 people and it was still early in the game so users with high leadership and fame were rare.

“The reason that Alan could gather enough forces to capture an estate in Nagaran was because of that.”

In fact, Ark had been wondered about it when he heard that Alan had occupied a castle. But he was able to understand after he examined the guild. Alan chose the highest level users among the candidates. If you compared their levels to the rest of New World, they weren't that high. That was because the candidates had the penalty of starting the game one month late. But that was why Alan could stand out! The special quality of a Holy Knight was a bonus to fame and leadership. 500 people, which was more than 6 times the number of people in Ark's group. The guild also occupied the castle and the average level of the equipment was higher.

He had at most 80 people. If a group consisting of 80% NPCs attacked an opponent like that, there was a 100 in 100 chance of them losing. The Holy Knight was a class specializing in group combat and it was a wall that Ark couldn't climb over. JusticeMan thought for a moment before saying.

“Then we have no choice but to use guerrilla warfare.”

He had no chance in a head on confrontation. All that would be left was defeat. In Nagaran, if the NPC mercenaries hired by a user died then the death penalty for a user was also applied to them. No access for 24 hours. In other words, if he disposed of the Dawn Blade guild one by one within 24 hours then he might have a chance to defeat Alan. However, Ark shook his head.

“I've already checked that. But it is impossible.”

“Impossible?”

“If the guild captures a castle, they obtain the right to occupy it just like an NPC. Unless they leave the castle where we can attack them, it will have to be siege warfare. And I know that Alan and the members of the Dawn Blade guild will not leave the castle.

“Then the method to take down Alan is.....?”

“.....The only way to win is to apply for a siege.”

The atmosphere of the barracks sank heavily. In order to defeat Alan, he had raked up equipment and rushed here while avoiding other battles. But the opponent was like a rock while Ark and his companions were eggs. Although money was lost,

they could just give up and return before further damage was done. They were suffering from indecision. At that time, Ark once again opened his mouth.

“We have no choice but to do a siege.”

“But we’re not a match for the opponents.

“If it was only us then that would be true.”

“Only us? Then you mean.....?”

“Yes, an alliance.”

Ark nodded and replied. Yes, that was the reason why Ark hadn’t given up even after he investigated in Selebrid.

Anyway, siege warfare was not something that one guild could afford. In this war, having a large number of people would be more advantageous. Of course, there was a limit on the number of people one person could gather. Various interests had to be taken into account and they also needed income and profit so that they could capture another castle. Since Nagaran was just starting to become occupied, it would be difficult to expect a large profit in the beginning. In general, it was normal for 1000~2000 to be mobilized for a siege. Ark paid attention to this point. Once the territories became larger than tens of thousands of people could be mobilized. There wasn’t a gap where Ark could intrude. Even mercenaries could do well with the appropriate tactics. However, Ark had room if there were only 1000~2000 people.

“Guilds will definitely want to join an alliance with us.

Once entered into an alliance, it was likely that the largest guild would gain control of the castle. However, Ark had no desire to obtain a territory in the first place. No, if possible he wanted to occupy it because it might make him a huge profit. But realistically it was impossible. The reason was because of the nature of occupation. Since Ark didn’t have a support base outside of NPCs, it would be impossible for him to defeat the guilds that would challenge him and continue occupying the castle. Therefore Ark had been disinterested from the beginning.

‘Investigating the fraud case and getting back the money lost as collateral would be nice, but it is difficult. Then I must focus on obtaining the money confiscated from Sid. Yes, it is vital to take down Alan first.’

Then, JusticeMan raised a question.

"It is a good idea. But you can't look for a guild to ally with blindly. It has to be a guild that is in Silvana and also knows guild siege warfare."

"It is simple to recognize."

Ark started laying out the rules.

"Do you know the rules for a siege?"

"Siege rules?"

"It was the first thing I found out in Selebrid. Dozens of guilds can challenge them but it takes place once a day."

"Indeed a siege would cost a lot of money. It would cost a lot of withstand daily sieges, even with the tax from the estate. But if they don't accept the challenge from other guilds then they won't be able to occupy the castle.....eh? Is that really true?"

"Once a week. That's the minimum amount of challenges you have to accept as a Lord."

Ark explained the information gathered in Selebrid. Once a week or more, they must accept the challenge of the other guilds. That was the basic rules of the siege. And if they don't accept the challenge of other guilds within a week then the power to veto challenges will disappear. Now, which guilds would be able to challenge Alan? It was at this part that Ark showed interest.

"They decide the challenge rights through a lottery."

"A lottery?"

"The Shrine of War is a place within Nagaran. It is the only neutral territory. And when there is only 2 days left in the veto deadline for the Lord, it is where they decide the guild using a lottery. If the Lord knows the guild then they can decide to waive the remaining time or accept the challenge from another guild."

"It is a right given to the Lord of the castle."

"Yes, there are various benefits to being the Lord of a castle. During those two days, the Lord can gather all his allies and make preparations for the siege."

"I know what you mean. So you will try and contact the guild selected?"

"Yes."

“Um.....but if we only have 100 people then will they enter an alliance with us?”

“Well I don’t know until I try. And because the challenger is chosen by chance not power, there is a possibility that we might be chosen. If we possess the challenge right then manage guilds will approach first.”

He honestly didn’t expect that much. His luck had never been that good in New World. At that time, a silent member of the rehabilitation group lifted his head and said. He was a former gambler who was nicknamed ‘Tazza’ by the rehabilitation members.

“Ark. What kind of system is the lottery?”

“I don’t know yet. I just heard that it was lottery.”

“Really?”

Tazza raised his mouth and nodded.

“I have a good feeling for some reason.”

“Huk, you! You look like.....?”

Once Ark transformed into Dark Wolf, Cross and the NPCs became surprised at the intimidating form. Silvana was Alan’s home territory, so if he reveals his true shape than Alan would receive the knowledge in advance. So he was going to participate in the Shrine War under Dark Wolf. He explained the situation to Cross who nodded.

“That’s right. But I can’t believe you’re really Dark Wolf.”

“Yes?”

“I saw you in the Evil Silrion newsletter. It was an amazing fight.”

Cross silently sent him a look of respect. Since he had never transformed into Dark Wolf after that, he had never seen a NPCs reaction. However, the winner of the tournament was someone that most warrior NPCs held in high esteem. Of course, it could also be the opposite. The Meow warriors grunted in a dissatisfied voice.

“Sheesh, you turned yourself into a wolf of all things.....”

It was common sense that cats and dogs didn't get along. It was something Ark hadn't considered. But who was Ark?

“I don't like dogs. That's why I transformed into a dog. It is because my fighting spirit will burn even further if I'm in a form that I hate.”

“Ah ah, is that so? It is like you said.”

The Meow quickly nodded. It was because cats are fairly simple. They also didn't give off a forceful impression. If he transformed into a cat, it would be more like a gag concert than a fight.

“Now let's depart.”

Ark finished the preparations and left the tent with Cross. The War Shrine was a neutral territory. However all the other areas except for the Shrine of War was a war zone. Since it was possible to be murdered in a village, he needed a bodyguard just in case. But he couldn't take JusticeMan and all of the rehabilitation company. He didn't know what would happen if he left the NPCs alone. Therefore JusticeMan stayed behind to protect the barracks while only Jjak-tung and Tazza followed him. They insisted on going with him, even if they ended up dying together.

The Shrine of War was nestled in the heart of the nearest town. When he arrived at the shrine, a uniformed NPC was standing in front to take the lottery registrations. Ark greeted the priest like he learned in Selebrid.

“I'm here with the intention to join the honourable battle.....”

“A righteous person will obtain the last victory....! Are you here to participate in the ceremony of trust?”

The priest asked with a friendly gaze.

“Yes, I heard that I could participate in an attack.”

“Of course.” You must have more than 50 people to take place in a raid.”

“There are 83 people.”

The priest confirmed the information of Ark's raid party and nodded.

“There are 83 people. But you haven’t registered to participate in a siege at the War Shrine yet. In order to participate in the siege, you must register your party. Would you like to register now?”

Ark filled out the registration form under the guidance of the priest.

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| * Attacker: Dark Eden | *Attack Leader: Ark |
| * Unit Commander: JusticeMan | *Number of Personnel: 83 |

He came up with the name of the group while he was writing. He got the name Ark from the Bible so he also got the name of the attack group from the Bible.

“Thank you. You may enter.”

It was at that time. Tazza approached the priest and asked in a low voice.

“Does the attack leader have to be the one that draws the lottery?”

“Not really. Anyone from the guild or the attacking party can draw the lot.”

“Ark, I’ll draw the lottery.”

“Sure.”

Ark nodded without thinking. It didn’t matter who picked since it relied on chance. No, Ark was more busy gathering information about possible allies than worrying about the lottery. So Ark and his party entered the shrine. The significant area of the shrine was already packed with people. Indeed, the representatives of the guilds seeking to occupy the castle were armed with all kinds of advanced equipment! There was a crest on their chests that represented their guild and Ark memorized twenty of them. And some of those gathered were already in an alliance.

‘It will be difficult with the emerging forces.’

The odds were in favour of a huge force winning to chance to capture Silvana. And if they have huge forces then it was possible that they had hit the limit on their troops and weren’t likely to allow Ark’s unit to join. However, Ark could not find the answer to gathering the same type of forces. Then something unexpected happened when Ark was looking away.

“Huk, what, what the? That person?”

“.....The Black Wolf clan.....it can’t be?”

The users' attention instantly focused on Ark.

"Dark Wolf!"

"Dark Wolf is also after Silvana?"

'Eh? What the?' How do they know me?'

Ark felt embarrassed by the enthusiastic attention of the players. In fact Ark was unaware that Dark Wolf had already become a celebrity. The people who watched the match at the Evil Silrion was 10,000 people! However, the users that knew of Dark Wolf were many times that number. Some users uploaded a video capture onto the Internet where it was at the top of the search rankings. Ark only visited the auction site on the Internet. Therefore the attention made Ark uncomfortable.

'Damn, if I knew than I would've transformed into something else even if it took longer.....'

Ark avoided the eager eyes and sighed. But his features shone to the users watching him.

"Is he avoiding attention?"

"He probably doesn't think that we are worthy of his attention."

"Indeed, Dark Wolf is probably already in a large guild."

"If we had that influential power then it would be a huge help....."

Ark pricked his ears at those words.

'Eh? They don't dislike me?'

Since he defeated the pioneers, it wasn't impossible that the crowd would have that reaction. If so, then the name Dark Wolf would probably be helpful when forming an alliance with other guilds. Ark was thinking like that.

Then all of a sudden the people in the shrine stirred.

"The Grey Wings guild!"

The people split like the Red Sea as a group of people entered the shrine. They were people aiming for the castle. Naturally they were armed with high level equipment from the auction house. However, even he felt humble at the people who appeared this time. After Ark polished his eye in the blind auction, he was able to estimate

how much the equipment was worth! Even if he could only see the periphery, it was clear what kind of position they occupied in Silvana. When the disturbance appeared to be shrinking, another group appeared.

"T-they came. The Hermes Guild!"

Ark reflexively turned his head and flinched. The equipment that appeared in that crowd wasn't a joke. However Ark wasn't surprised because of the equipment. There were two users on either side of the leader. Surprisingly they were the two pioneers he met in the Evil Silrion.....Jewel and Duke.

"Just by looking I can tell that force isn't a joke."

"Isn't there over 30 pioneers that belong to the Hermes Guild?"

"Damn, a decent guild won't even be able to make an offer to them."

The sound of gossip from the crowd flowed into his ears.

'The pioneers are the people with the highest level in New World and there are 30 of them!'

Ark looked at Jewel and Duke. He now realised that the five pointed star was the crest of the Hermes Guild. With that background a pioneer didn't have to hide their face and name in the Evil Silrion.

'Alan managed to occupy a castle even with that guild here?'

Then he carelessly locked eyes with Jewel. For a moment Jewel's face wrinkled.

"You are.....!"

'Damn, I never thought I would meet Jewel and Duke in Silvana.'

Ark became annoyed. The situation was starting to become more twisted. When Ark and Jewel's eyes met, it immediately gained attention from the crowd.

"Jewel from the Hermes Guild!"

"That's right, wasn't Dark Wolf's final opponent Jewel and Duke?"

However Jewel just focused on Ark and didn't pay any attention to the other users.

"To think that I would see you in Silvana....."

"Jewel."

Then, someone touched Jewel's shoulder. It was a knight who looked like the leader.

".....Sheesh, I know."

Jewel turned around with a dissatisfied look and muttered in a low voice.

"I'll return the grudge later."

"Any time."

Ark bluntly replied and turned his head. The knight looked at Ark quickly before leaving with Jewel and Duke. The situation had become so sticky that Ark's head was whirling with complicated thoughts.

'It has become troublesome.'

An enormous guild with a large number of pioneers. Clearly the Hermes Guild had a large influence in Silvana. He obtained a hostile relationship with a guild as soon as he entered Silvana. He couldn't guarantee that no problems would occur. But Ark shook his head.

'I don't have to be concerned about that. This was a transformation anyway. And my opponent is Alan. The Hermes Guild is also aiming for the castle. Since the guild's opponent is also Alan then they shouldn't cause any problems for me.'

.....He hoped.

Once all the participants were gathered then the administrator stepped onto a podium.

"According to the rules set by the kings of the Three Kingdoms, it is time to determine who will gain the right to challenge. The representatives of each registered attack party or guild come forward!"

'There are more people than I thought!'

Ark had identified 50 guilds in Silvana. But there were 70 people who came forward. Some were smaller groups like Ark who was hoping to participate through luck. So the odds of winning were 1/70.

'I thought it was possible, but it will be seriously difficult to obtain the challenge right.'

"Don't worry."

Tazza who was standing beside him muttered as Ark sighed.

"Anyway, the odds are unrelated to the number. No matter how many people gather, the odds of victory are 50/50. Either winning or not winning."

"But....."

"There is no need to worry. Just watch me. Hyung-nim will show you a skill."

"Skill?"

Tazza just smiled subtly. When the users gathered, the administrator lifted a piece of paper.

"Because there are first time participants, I will explain it simply. The person who picks this piece of paper will obtain the challenge right. While some people might think it unreasonable, luck is also a skill on the battlefield. The same thing also applies for obtaining the chance to participate in the siege. The God of War will bless those equipped with luck and skills."

The presence of a God of War while drawing lots.....As expected, the NPCs in New World had a medieval mindset. But there were no users who raised an objection. The administrator placed the piece of paper in the lottery and shook it. Then Tazza stealthily moved beside Jjak-tung and asked.

"How is it?"

"It is surprisingly simple. 3 minutes is enough."

Jjak-tung nodded with suspicious eyes and disappeared somewhere. Meanwhile, the draw was proceeding. However, the odds were 1/70. It couldn't be won so easily. 30 people had drawn a blank piece of paper and retreated cursing.

"God dammit!"

The leader of the Hermes Guild had also drawn a blank piece of paper. At that time, Jjak-tung came back and handed something to Tazza.

"That's it. It hasn't come out yet?"

Tazza laughed and shook his head.

"This much is okay."

Half of the participants had drawn a blank piece of paper. Then Tazza immediately climbed onto the stage.

"I am the representative of the Dark Eden party."

"Pick a lot."

"Dark Wolf, you should prepare champagne."

The administrator held out the lottery to Tazza who winked at Ark. And he slowly lifted a lottery with a serious expression. Then he closed his eyes tightly and murmured something.

"Come out, come out, come out, ah the pressure!"

The users who were looking stirred.

"Eh?" "What, what the.....?"

"The Red SealIt really came out?"

"Holy shit!"

The users murmured with disappointed voices. Surprisingly Tazza had really pulled out the winning piece of paper with an engraved seal.

"I did it! I really got it! I picked it!"

Once he confirmed the message, Tazza jumped and shouted. After the loud barrage, he shook the piece of paper at the administrator.

"I picked it! Is it okay? We've obtained the right to challenge?"

"That is correct. Congratulations. So just calm down....."

"Hahaha, I did it! Mother, I did it!"

Although the administrator was embarrassed, Tazza ran around enthusiastically. Then he accidentally fell with the lottery while he was running around. The lottery hit the floor with a crash and slips of paper came rushing out.

"Sheesh, way to go."

"He hasn't even occupied the castle yet and is already acting carelessly....."

The users who failed muttered in a cold voice. Then Tazza hurriedly got up and bowed with an embarrassed expression.

"I'm really sorry."

"No. Can I look at the lottery to confirm it?"

"Yes? Ah! Here you go."

"Um.....There is no error. The right to challenge in the next attack has gone to the group Dark Eden. If Dark Eden doesn't abandon the challenge or the Lord doesn't accept another guild's challenge within the next two days, Dark Eden will be sieging the castle."

After the administrator's announcement, the disappointed users scattered. Ark, Jjak-tung and Tazza also left the shrine. Ark spoke with a slightly flushed expression.

"We really won.....luck is favouring me today!"

"Luck? Ark, there is no such thing as luck in this world."

"Yes?"

Tazza stretched out his hand with a cynical smile. The previous winning note was in his hand. Why was he showing it again? Ark stared blankly until he suddenly flinched and raised his head.

"Wait, didn't the administrator take the winning piece of paper a short while ago?"

"That's real."

"Yes? Real.....t-then?"

"I told you. Didn't I say that there was no such thing as luck in this world?"

Tazza shrugged before explaining the situation. It was the reason Tazza and Jjak-tung strongly insisted on coming. They had lived in a world where they had a lot of experience with this kind of lottery.

"Lotteries drawn this way are normally meant to be fair."

Tazza got a hint from there. Jjak-tung was a former criminal and experienced in forgeries. Therefore there was a skill he obtained in New World.....he immediately used 'Counterfeit.' He hadn't used it that much so it was still a beginner skill, but it

allowed him to create a similar object. The reason Jjak-tung had disappeared for a while was to forge the winning paper.

“Then there is my technique.”

Tazza had firmly grasped the lottery slip. And when he opened it the slip of paper disappeared. He had used the same technique when Ark visited JusticeMan’s house. Tazza was skilled in hiding and changing the pieces of paper in a blink of an eye. It required a lot of skill. Since he lived his whole life as a gambler, this skill was engraved in Tazza’s body. After seeing the technique, Ark was able to understand the situation. Tazza held the forged slip of paper in one hand while drawing out a lottery slip in the other. Of course the forged winning note would be picked. It was an amazing hand trick that Tazza had learnt from his years as a gambler that no one spotted.

The probability of success was 100%!

“Well, it was lucky that the lottery fell down before the votes inside were taken out.”

‘He could play the game in this way.....’

While Ark was listening with a foolish face, he realized something strange.

“But you said that you had given the administrator the winning note? Then you actually had to take out the winning slip of paper?”

“That’s right, that’s the toughest part of this trick.”

When Tazza waved his hand, the forged note was shown. Then when he moved his fingers, the winning slip disappeared.

“Anyway, it’s a fake created with beginner skills. If they check it then it would be discovered. With a first rate NPC, there is no possibility of deceiving him. So I switched it later on.”

“Yes? You changed it.....but the winning note was inside the lottery.....eh? Then perhaps?”

“Bingo!”

Tazza said and flicked his forehead. Tazza had pulled out the real note by causing a fake commotion and then spilling all the lottery slips onto the ground. Since the already saw the winning note, the users and administrator had no interest in the lottery slips. But the winning piece of paper was still in it. In the brief moment when

the lottery slips were pouring out, Tazza found the real one and switched it. It was a precisely calculated fraud!

“You might be superior in the game but we’re experts.”

“.....”

He really didn’t have anything to say. It was a daring idea but Ark wouldn’t have had the ability to pull it off. It was only possible to Jjak-tung and Tazza who have lived eventful lives!

‘The real experts are terrific!’

Ark was speechless with admiration.

“Dark Wolf-nim.”

Later 30 users approached him. A satisfied smile appeared on Ark’s face.

‘All right, they’re caught!’

The people had approached Ark in order to request an alliance!

Act 7: Conditions of the Alliance

“Transfer?”

It fell short of Ark’s expectations. Haiyan, the user who introduced himself nodded and said.

“Yes, if you transfer the challenge to us then I’ll immediately give you 300 gold.”

“Are you able to transfer the challenge rights?”

“Didn’t you know?”

Haiyan asked in surprise.

“Not everybody who signs up wants to participate in the siege. Half the people register because the challenge right can be bought at a high price.”

‘So that’s why all the small groups gathered?’

If they were lucky and drew the prize than they could obtain hundreds of gold. Therefore they registered for the siege even if they had no interest.

“Right. But I have no intention of selling.”

“I heard that Dark Eden is an attack group.....have you already joined hands with another guild?”

“No. I’m looking for allies now.”

“Then it would be better to sell to us.”

Haiyan said with a look of relief.

“I’ll explain it simply since you are new to Silvana. There are 50 guilds and attack groups currently in Silvana but the only forces worth paying attention to is the Hermes Guild and our Grey Wings guild. The rest of the guilds haven’t made a coalition yet. Therefore making an alliance with them won’t be easy. Did you see everyone leaving after the lot was drawn?”

Then Ark became a little embarrassed. He thought that if he won the right to challenge then many offers of alliance would pour in from other guilds. But no one had approached him even after he left the shrine. Haiyan just laughed.

“There are two reasons for this. The first is that they can’t make a decision until they see who wins the challenge right.”

“So they can see if there is a shot at winning?”

“Of course, that could be a reason. The Dawn Blade guild has pretty strong allies. But there is a more important reason. Three weeks has passed since the Dawn Blade guild occupied the castle. So there should’ve been three sieges. But the guild didn’t confront any of the three winners.”

“What is that.....?”

“I don’t fully know why. But those guilds received the challenge right. But there is a clue. The veto power disappears if they don’t accept a challenge from another guild within the next two days. In other words, if the Lord accepts a challenge from another guild then your right will become invalid. Do you understand?”

“Then Alan?”

“Yes, he always accepted a challenge just before the veto right would disappear. He accepted a rising guild called Hades all three times. Although we searched for them

in Silvana, they managed to send a challenge to Alan all three times. Unlike the lottery, once Alan accepts the challenge then it is a 100% chance of a siege occurring. So many guilds tried to contact for an alliance request but it isn't easy."

'Hades?'

With a flash, Ark realized what was happening. He had already heard the name Hades once. Sid had engraved the crest of the masked robbers into his head. It was the crest of the Hades guild. If that's the case.....one thought immediately came to Ark's mind. Hades was associated with Alan. There was probably a secret relationship between the masked robbers and Alan. No, it was possible that the ghost guild was created by Alan. Yes. Alan created a ghost guild which he pretended to accept so that he could lessen the burden of the siege! So it was impossible for Hades to accept the allied request of another guild. The last three times they gathered, they probably had a barbeque party instead of a siege.

'Heung, that Alan fellow. He went on TV and talked about strategy exposure and other nonsense when this was the actual case. He used such a lousy method.....'

Thanks to Tazza, Ark had managed to find a blind spot in the system. However, Alan was already using a much higher level fraud.

'No, it is not all bad news. There should be a way to prove the relationship between Alan and the Hades guild through an NPC witnessing the siege. Then there would be evidence that Alan swindled Sid. I might even be able to get back the 300 gold taken as collateral!'

He had half given up on the 3000 gold but now there was a way to recover it!

'But why did Alan do say a dangerous thing? Unlike his outer appearance, Alan is a snake. He knows that the slightest slip would be fatal to his reputation. He would only trust a partner who he could control completely. Then possibly.....'

"Do you know the name of the Hades guild master?"

"I never participated in the lottery but someone told me that the name registered in the War Shrine is Andel."

'Indeed!'

It was clear that Alan and Andel were conspiring to keep their hold on Silvana. Anyway the alliance between Alan and Andel could be a serious problem.

'Damn, I thought it would be settled once I received the challenge right.....'

Then, Ark realised that there were some inconsistencies in Haiyan's words.

"Wait, then why do you want to buy the challenge right from me? If Alan only accepts the challenge from Hades then why do you want it?"

"That's why I'm going to explain the second reason."

Haiyan answered.

"There is a separate provision in the siege rules. If the guild leader with the challenge right dies or more than 40% of his guild dies then the challenge right would automatically disappear. In other words, if more than 40% of Hades or Andel dies before the siege begins then his right to challenge would be cancelled. If Hade's challenge disappears and the Lord hasn't accepted another challenge then it would automatically revert to Dark Wolf."

Ark couldn't understand what Haiyan was saying. But he understood the contents well enough. The Grey Wings was aiming to get rid of Hade's right to challenge before Alan could accept it. Then wouldn't Ark's challenge right be important? But Haiyan said that the other guilds would definitely not make an offer of alliance to Ark.

But if Ark had the challenge right then why wouldn't they ally with him? But his question was answered immediately.

"That rule also applies to those with the challenge right. In other words, if Dark Wolf or more than 40% of Dark Eden is killed then your challenge right will be cancelled. If that happens then this lottery will be held again. That is why I would like to skip such difficulties by buying the challenge right."

Tension gathered in Ark's face. He noticed the threat hidden inside the message. The only forces with power in Silvana were the Grey Wings and Hermes guild! He should've noticed when he heard those words. It didn't simply mean that they had the ability to take part in a siege. It meant that they were able to take the challenge right from other guilds if they wanted.

'I see. Then I would have to fight them off in Nagaran!'

Ark had tried to avoid fighting with any guilds when he entered Nagaran. Since his only purpose was to occupy the castle. There was no reason to fight with other guilds. But he couldn't avoid it if it was a quarrel over the challenge right. Challenge right.....This small thing would be the main cause of endless battles and assassination in Nagaran. The reason why other guilds wouldn't ally with Ark was also clear. If they allied with Ark then they would be the target of the Grey Wings

and Hermes guild who are Silvana's biggest powers. Because Ark didn't have the power to protect them, they would rather wait until one of the two guilds defeated Ark and then send an ally request to the winner.

Nagaran was a land of war where anyone had the opportunity to become lords they said. However whether it was reality or a game, the number of people capable of becoming lords was only a handful. Ark clenched his teeth and inwardly thought.

'.....I made a mistake!'

Haiyan had asked him if he had a huge guild or alliance. He had wanted to determine if Ark had joined hands with a big guild that he didn't know about. If he killed Ark then he didn't want to risk having a hostile relationship with the huge guild. However, Ark answered that he didn't have an alliance and wanted to make one. He confessed with his own mouth that he had no power behind him. It was a fatal mistake! He basically told Haiyan that there would be no trouble if he killed Ark. Haiyan had calculated all of this before he approached.

'Alan and.....Haiyan.....they use their heads unlike ordinary players. It wasn't easy to obtain a castle in Nagaran using just power. If it was like that than the Hermes guild with the power of the pioneers would've occupied the castle.'

There were numerous plots and schemes! Alliances and oppositions! There were all kinds of rules in New World! Once he grasped all the rules it was possible to move carefully and survive in Nagaran.

'I was irrational because of the money and ran to Nagaran without finding all the information, which meant I made a big mistake!'

"What do you think?"

Haiyan smiled like he was a nice person and asked.

"Have you made a decision after I kindly explained everything?"

30 users standing behind Haiyan laid their hands on their swords. If he failed to respond then they wouldn't hesitate to kill him! Jjak-tung and Tazza also noticed the gesture.

"What's this? Are you going to try it?"

"Just like the rumours, this really is a lawless area. We're actually being threatened like this in town!"

Cross and the Sylphid Knights also grabbed their swords with anger.

“Wait!”

Ark was surprised and interrupted all of them.

‘The Grey Wings are one of the two major forces in Silvana. They could probably mobilize hundreds of troops in an emergency.....if it was just users then he wouldn’t care.....’

If Ark or the rehabilitation members escaped the crisis then they could just disconnect until it was time for the siege. Andel probably use such a method until the siege was imminent and then he would log in. Now Ark couldn’t use such a method. 80% of his troops were NPCs. If the NPCs escaped here then the Grey Wings guild would track them down and wipe them out. The fatal weakness of Dark Eden was that NPCs was the core of their group. However, Ark had one last card.

“So why not ally with us?”

Yes, if the Grey Wings guild allied with them then all the problems would be solved. In a situation like this, Ark thought to enter an alliance with conditions. However, Haiyan shook his head.

“I’m really sorry. The members already chosen are very tight.”

“But

“I’ll sell it. That’s the only thing you can say to us.”

‘Damn, do I really have to give up the challenge right?’

Ark ground his teeth together as he thought. If he lost the NPCs then he wouldn’t be able to achieve anything.

Bang bang double bang!

It was at that time. An extravagant was suddenly heard from the side alley. Ark and Haiyan turned their heads at the same time.

“Grey wings. What are you trying to do hiding in a place like this!”

“Kukukuk, it’s obvious. But that idea isn’t going to work!”

“We’ve already taken the wolf.”

"These Hermes guys! They're trying to scatter ash on our hard boiled rice!"

Haiyan growled and took out his sword. The users who fired magic randomly from a side alley wore the mark of a five pointed star.

The Hermes Guild! The leader he saw in the shrine, Jewel, Duke and dozens of other people firing arrows or magic was gathered on a side street.

"It's not necessary to see. Kill everyone!"

Haiyan's troops who received a surprise attack took a lot of damage. However, the surprise wasn't enough to make the Grey Wings crumble.

"Stop them! Don't let the challenge right shift to the Hermes Guild!"

When Haiyan raised his voice an extra 20 people ran out from an alley.

"Sheesh, this fellow hid people here for an ambush."

They did it in case the Grey Wings guild needed to attack Ark's party. But the Hermes Guild suddenly appeared and everything became mixed up. Since there were 100 troops fighting in a cramped street, the fighting became confused as people were cramped next to each other. But since they had similar numbers, the pioneers from the Hermes Guild started prevailing.

10 people from the Grey Wings guild collapsed without being able to drink a potion. Once the balance was broken, the Hermes Guild became the overwhelming side. But the two guild's fight didn't have anything to do with Ark.

"This is a chance, run!"

Ark led his party and began running down the alley.

"Dark Wolf is running away. Get him!"

"Come back here!"

When Haiyan tried to run after him the leader of the Hermes Guild immediately blocked him with a shield. Haiyan's lips curled up.

"Raiden.....you.....!"

"Heh, I thought that you should taste victory and then defeat."

The leader called Raiden laughed and shouted to Duke and Jewel.

"I'll take care of this, you two chase after Dark Wolf!"

"Come on, let's go!"

Jewel and Duke tracked Ark while leading 20 people from their guild. When members of the Grey Wings guild tried to block them, Duke and Jewel shot arrows and magic and they quickly collapsed. With Raiden there, the Grey Wings guild had to continuously defend against him. Thanks to that, Jewel and Duke were able to chase after Ark without worrying.

"Dark Wolf, I won't miss!"

Jewel's magic attack range and damage wasn't a joke. It extended over ten metres to steadily drain his health. Duke also used the special effect of his shoes to barrage him with arrows that decreased his health. As long as they didn't have the level penalty of the Evil Silrion than their power was scary.

'An encounter like this!'

Ark sent an uneasy look towards Cross. Ark, Tazza and Jjak-tung were wearing leather armour. However, Cross and the Sylphid Knights were wearing heavy armour so their speed dropped significantly. It was because their role was as a shield but in a crisis they were quickly overtaken.

'Jewel and Duke have 20 guild members. Although it would be difficult, I might be able to handle those numbers. But I'll be screwed if the rest of the Hermes Guild comes here.'

Then Cross turned his body around as they were rounding a corner.

"Damn it, I can't do it. I'll make a stand here. You run away!"

"No way!"

Ark let out a startled scream. However, Cross just lifted his sword with a resolute expression.

"It would be difficult to escape their pursuit anyway. In addition we are soldiers fired from the state of Jackson! I can't stand being pursued like flies by these fellows and then dying. If I die then I'll die with pride....."

"Don't be silly!"

Ark quickly grabbed Cross' shoulders.

"Do you think I brought you here just to die in a place like this? Even if I die here, you have to live! No, I'll revive!"

"Ah, Ark.....!"

Cross flinched and looked at Ark with bloodshot eyes. However, Ark was cursing inside his head.

'Damn it, does an NPC have no awareness?'

His pent up anger was bursting. It wasn't an exaggeration to say that all of Ark's power relied on the NPCs. If Ark, Tazza and Jjak-tung died then they could revive in 24 hours. But if an NPC died once then it was goodbye forever. It was difficult enough to bring them to Nagaran from Jackson, if he lost 20 of them then how would he be able to challenge the siege? Even if Ark died, the NPC wasn't supposed to die.

'I'm prepared to risk my life for the NPCs!'

His anger built up but Ark hid it in his heart and spoke.

"If you sacrifice your lives for me then I really won't be able to live with myself!"

"Ark, for us you.....!"

"You are indeed Jackson's Hero, it wasn't a mistake to follow you!"

"If it is for you then we're not afraid of death!"

Cross and his party's emotions burned even more after his words.

"Didn't I say you couldn't do that? Please listen to me a little bit! Jjak-tung hyung, Tazza hyung, you know these guys are important for my goals. So accompany the soldiers and escape first! I'll take care of the rest. If I'm on my own then I'll be able to get out somehow."

"I understand. Sir Cross, follow me!"

Tazza and Jjak-tung guessed Ark's thoughts and led the soldiers down another alley. The Hermes Guild shouted from up ahead.

"They have scattered!"

"Bah, they just want to distribute our power. But our target is only Dark Wolf. Attacking his group means nothing to me. Dark Wolf has the challenge right!"

“Everyone circle the narrow alley and block his escape routes!”

The guild members scattered in all directions under Jewel’s command. Then Ark started to be hunted like a wild boar. The members of Hermes Guild were all higher level than him. Of course he had confidence of winning 1-on-1, but with them circling him there was no chance for that. But the most intimidating members were Jewel and Duke as expected.

“Lightning Curse!”

Black lightning poured from Jewel’s fingertips. When Ark tried to run away, the AOE magic quickly expanded. The damage of wide area magic was lower than that of a single spell. Yet he still lost 300 health and had a curse hanging on him. Duke’s ‘Footprint Trace’ skill was also a problem. It allowed him to track Ark no matter where he hid in the alleys and he would inform the rest of the guild.

“Hahaha, Dark Wolf. Where did you spirit from the arena go?”

Jewel continuously shot magic while taunting him. Although his pent up anger was starting to build, there was no way for him to escape.

‘My health is already at 70%. Even if I run away, I won’t be able to hold up for 1 minute! But in their situation there is nowhere to hide.....’

Then something popped into Ark’s head. When he entered Nagaran, he read a description of the basic rules.

‘That’s right, there are still a few rules to keep in mind even if I’m not in a siege. I should’ve thought of this before.....!’

“Summon Demon, Deimos!”

Clack clack, clack clack clack! Deimos came running with his sword.

“Sorry Deimos! I’ll waive the penalty just this once!”

Ark covered Deimos with a leather robe and kicked him while covered into the lane outside. Deimos rolled out into the lane and stumbled around as he was confused about what was happening. At that moment, a black ray of light hit Deimos.

Ttadak! Ttadak!

“I caught you.....eh? What the?” Isn’t he one of Dark Wolf’s summons? Damn you can go to hell!”

Jewel's face contorted as she turned around. She had kicked and shot magic at Deimos when he appeared but she immediately grasped the situation. Then Deimos grabbed at Jewel's pants with his burning loyalty.

"This.....cheeky skeleton.....!"

Jewel struck Deimos with fists filled with magical powers. He was hit a few times with his health falling by 5% until he was engulfed in a dim light and disappeared. Ark had released the summons. Jewel belatedly entered the alley that Ark was in. Then she followed to a side street where an embarrassed look spread on her face.

"God dammit.....!"

There was a market across from the alley. The market was teeming with numerous NPCs. Yes, Ark had thrown Deimos as bait before running into the market. There was one type of person that users couldn't touch in the lawless area of Nagaran. It was NPCs with neutral alignment. Even Jewel with the help of the Hermes Guild couldn't indiscriminately attack.

"Look around, he couldn't have gone too far!"

Jewel plunged into the market annoyed. But Ark wasn't that far from Jewel. While Jewel's eyes were focused on Deimos, Ark released the transformation and blended in with the NPCs.

'I'm glad that Jewel doesn't know my true form.'

Ark sighed as he leisurely strolled through the market.

'Anyway, this time I managed to get away.'

Ark returned to the barracks and summed up the situation.

'Our forces alone won't be enough to knock Alan down. I will have to join hands with one of the two main guilds in Silvana, either the Grey Wings or Hermes guild.'

There was no time. Soon the Grey Wings and Hermes would come find Ark. He had to request protection from one of them before they find him. But when he spoke to the Grey Wings they said their capacity was already full. If he looked at the situation objectively, from the fight in the alley he could tell that the Hermes guild was stronger than the Grey Wings.

‘But Jewel and Duke are in Hermes. Even if I have the challenge right, they won’t accept me as allies. Moreover, it will also be meaningless if Alan accepts the challenge from other guilds. I have to make sure that Hermes will accept the alliance…….’

A smile suddenly formed on Ark’s mouth.

‘That’s right. The answer is surprisingly simple. I’m the one with the power to call the shots.’

Ark used a ‘Feather of Whispering’ to call Jewel. Since Jewel was in Silvana, the communication connected.

-Ark? Who is Ark?

His real name was shown when he used the Feather of Whispering. Jewel only knew him as Dark Wolf so she asked in a strange voice.

-Will you understand if I say I’m Dark Wolf?

-D, Dark Wolf! You……!

The communication link instantly filled with abusive language. But Ark just responded with an energetic voice.

-Hey, farts are a natural body function……it will appear if a person becomes angry.

-If you’re in Silvana then I’ll definitely find you!

-Then I guess you don’t want to hear my proposal.

-Proposal? From you?

-As a pioneer do you have the right to speak for your guild? If you don’t then simply say so. As the leader of Dark Eden, I propose an alliance with the Hermes guild.

-Alliance? Ha, are you crazy? Why should we enter into an alliance with a guy like you?

-Are you forgetting that I hold the challenge right?

-That's no big deal, if you die then the challenge will become invalid. And since you alone have the challenge then you'll just lose against the opposing guild. We can just wait until next week.

-You must have forgotten about the Grey Wings.

-.....

Jewel was silent for a moment. It had a big effect. If he allied with Haiyan and the Grey Wings then he would have enough power to occupy the castle. And if the Grey Wings occupied the castle then it would become quite difficult for Hermes. It was an influential threat judging by Jewel's reaction.

'If I'm going to survive in Nagaran then I have to use my head too.'

But Jewel soon laughed.

-It doesn't matter if you ally with Grey Wings. It won't be accepted. Even though you have the challenge right, the situation will still be the same. You won't be able to participate in the siege and they'll abandon you.

-Because of Hades?

-.....That's right. Although we've tried to capture them for the last 3 weeks, we were unsuccessful. Alan will definitely accept Hades' challenge this time. Thus I don't have to worry about the Grey Wings joining with you.

-What if I take care of Hades?

-What?

-I'll speak clearly. I will be able to deal with Hades. If Alan accepts Hades challenge and they die then the next challenge rights will come to me. Do you think the Grey Wings would still decline my request? Even if you regret it after the Grey Wings occupies the castle, wouldn't it be too late?

-How can you guarantee that you will catch Hades?

-I can't go into detail, but I am 100% sure.

-.....I will consult with the guild leader.

Ark waited in a relaxed mood. They bit the bait that he threw. There was no reason to become impatient. After a few minutes the expected message window popped up.

-Raiden-nim has used a [Feather of Whispering] to whisper to you.

‘As expected, Raiden is the leader of the Hermes guild.’

Once Ark accepted the whisper, Raiden’s voice immediately entered his ear.

-.....I heard what you said.

-The answer is?

-It depends on the requirements.

-I will form an alliance with you and we’ll participate in the siege together. When you occupy Silvana then I will receive 40% of the proceeds every month.

-Isn’t that too much? -Silvana is still a territory that is developing. If we occupy the castle then the early investment will be more than the profits. In addition, we have already signed an alliance with 4 other guilds. Since I also have to distribute the proceeds to them, I will receive severe backlash if I give only you 40%.

-You’re not participating in the siege alone?

-We didn’t advertise that you obtained the challenge right. Since you talked to Grey Wing, we never imagined that you would contact us.

Heads will roll if I bring my forces into Nagaran under those conditions.

-Okay, 30%. With the condition that you will supply all the materials for the siege otherwise there is no reason to enter an alliance.

-I understand. I’ll agree to 30%. But there is a condition. You’re sixth in command.

And not everyone can participate in the siege. The right to sit on the throne is only given to the representative in command of the guild. And if a representative dies in battle then the right goes back to the next guild leader in command. In other words, all the representatives ahead of you will have to die before Ark can be given the command right.

Ark wasn’t interested in being a Lord in the first place so he just nodded.

-Okay, but if you occupy the castle then you should guarantee that I can come and go as I please. Also you have to protect Dark Eden from the Grey Wings guild until the start of the siege.

-That is natural in an alliance. Then the talk is over. Pick a place. We'll both come alone to sign the contract. However, the agreement will only become effective after you deal with the Hades guild.

After a few hours, Ark exchanged alliance agreements with Raiden.

Alliance Agreement Contractor: Hermes guild leader Raiden= Dark Eden attack captain Ark.

In accordance with the guild master Raiden, Hermes will join the alliance.

Details: If the Hermes Guild occupies the manor then 30% of the proceeds will be distributed to Ark every month. This part of the contract is only relevant when the Hermes Alliance occupies the castle. The conditions of the alliance will begin showing once Dark Eden takes care of the Hades guild.

'Hrm, I'm somewhat uncomfortable?'

Ark looked at the alliance agreement with uncomfortable eyes. He wasn't sure but 30% of the proceeds from the castle was probably a considerable amount of money. Frankly, Ark thought that receiving 10% would've been a success. But they promised 30% very easily. The pioneers possessed a lot more information than Ark. There may be some ulterior motives.

'But that can't just easily break the alliance agreement that both of us have agreed to. In addition, they also have agreements with other guilds. They won't be able to openly betray me.'

Ark signed the contract.

"Okay, now we're riding the same ship. You might have a bad relationship with Jewel and Duke but I'll tell them to bury the petty grudge in this situation. Our enemy is Alan."

"Yes, thank you."

Ark and Raiden shook each other's hand. Ark to reclaim his money, Raiden to occupy the castle.....

‘Okay, now I just have to draw out Andel.’

But it was not an easy matter. With other guilds looking for him, Andel won’t show up so easily. Of course, if Ark showed up then with Andel’s character it was likely he would approach first. But to do that, Ark had to catch Andel’s attention first. He was worried for a while before he came up with a brilliant plan.

‘If he wants to challenge Alan then he’ll have to stop by the Shrine of War. If he’s there then I can easily catch his attention.’

Ark went back to the square in front of the shrine. Then he summoned Dedric.

“You called, Master?”

“Yes, hit me until I tell you to stop.”

“Eh?”

Dedric looked at him with a stupid expression.

“D-did I do something wrong?”

“No, it’s not that. Don’t make irrelevant remarks and just hit me.”

Dedric tilted his head and thought for a moment before saying.

“Huhuhu, Master. Do you regret abusing me?”

He was really simple.....Ark didn’t feel like arguing so he just nodded.

“Well, it is like you said.”

“Okay, then should I do it later?”

“Do you want to annoy me?”

At that moment Ark crumpled. Dedric’s fist had hit his stomach. His breath got stuck in his jaw. He was careless since the appearance was like a child. But his level was quite considerable so his fist was quite hard. He told his summon to do it but

once he was hit he felt quite dirty. However, Ark pushed down his anger and endured it. When Ark showed no reaction, Dedric immediately began to hit Ark in earnest. He seemed to be releasing all his sorrows as he hit him again and again.....Ark's face quickly became swollen. While Ark was being beaten up by a kid in the middle of the square, users began to gather.

"What the?"

"That child doesn't seem to be a user.....why is a NPC beating up a user?"

"Is this also a quest?"

"What kind of quest would require being battered like that?"

The users looked at Ark with astonishment.

'Okay, people are beginning to gather.'

This was Ark's purpose. An astounding scene like this would gather people's attention. With so much attention focused on him, even Andel would become interested. This was to ensure that the opponent would approach Ark first. It was more efficiently than trying to find a guy that was hiding. But it wasn't the only reason that he was being hit by Dedric.

-Resilience has increased by 1.

When he endured for a while, a message window popped up. Resilience increased his resistance to blunt force! The way to increase his resilience was to be hit with blunt force. The reason he called Dedric was because Deimos used a sword. Since fists belonged to the blunt weapons category, he thought that being hit would increase his resilience stat. It increased his stats and attracted Andel's attention. It was the strategy of killing two birds with one stone!

But even so.....

"Hehehe, Master, die!"

Ark's face changed as Dedric became hyped up and swung his fists like crazy.

'This kid, is he really hitting me this ignorantly? He'll see in the future.'

Ark vowed revenge inside his heart.

‘Kukukuk, foolish bastards.....’

Andel smirked as he looked through the pile of mail. Although he hadn’t connected for a week, the day before the siege he temporarily connected to send a challenge. Meanwhile alliance requests or threatening letters to abandon the challenge had piled up. The most irritating letters were sent from the Grey Wings and Hermes guilds.

‘As expected, Alan is too smart.’

As predicted by Ark, Alan had created the phantom guild Hades. The guild consisted of 150 people. It was a small guild that concentrated on attacking. In order to refuse the challengers, he had created a ghost guild and placed people he trusted there. It was a clever method used to exploit the siege rules.

‘Now we just have to connect tomorrow and spend the time drinking alcohol.’

Andel finished the procedure and exited from the Shrine of War. That was when he noticed the crowd of users that were chattering in the nearby square. Andel became curious and peeked through the crowd before suddenly hiding his face.

“Eh, t-that guy is.....!”

The person who was creating an amazing scene in the square was.....Ark. Andel reflexively hid his body and looked at Ark.

‘What is he doing here.....aha, right. Alan was correct. If we beat the dog then the owner will come out.....he must’ve listened to Sid’s circumstances and came here. But why is he acting like that in the square? No, I don’t care. This is my chance! My knowledge of Silvana is similar to that of my home town. Once you’ve caught my eyes then it is the end!’

Andel grabbed his sword tightly. He wanted to just run out and cut him down right there. But Andel wasn’t stupid. He had already identified the tremendous growth of Ark in Cairo. On the other hand, Andel hadn’t really raised his level. He had almost never connected to the game in Silvana in order to hide his identity. Although he didn’t know why Ark was being beat up by his summon, but he was definitely not weak. Anger alone could not kill Ark.

'How should I do it? Should I summon the entire guild? But if he gets away in the meantime.....'

While Andel was thinking that, Ark recalled his summon and crossed the square.

'Ark, if he leaves Nagaran then it will be a problem.....but he knows my face.....'

Andel quickly arranged for one of his guild members to chase after Ark. Ark sneaked out of the town. And he arrived at a small camp after walking for 20 minutes. At the camp 10 people were gathered. They were JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members.

"Was it impossible?"

"I didn't think that Alan would be the Lord already. Now that Alan occupied the castle, I can challenge him to a battle but the odds aren't in my favour."

"It's not possible. Although we lost 3000 gold, it isn't possible to fight him. Since it will become troublesome if Alan knows we're here, let's just organize patrols before we leave."

"Yes....."

Ark replied with a grumpy face.

The news was immediately conveyed to Andel.

"Leave? Bah, do you think I will let you leave freely? Although you might have freely came in, I won't let you leave that easily. Once everyone is gathered then I'll use this chance to pay back my humiliation! Contact all the guild members and tell them to gather immediately!"

"But the siege is in 24 hours. Did you forget that Alan told you to stay hidden? If something happens....."

The guild member spoke in a worried voice. However, Andel was already too far gone to listen.

"At most they only have between ten and fifteen people. Nothing will happen."

"But aren't the Grey Wings and Hermes guilds looking for us?"

“Do you think I’m a fool? I received a call that the Grey Wings and Hermes guilds are fighting in another village. Now is the ideal chance. If anyone in the guild kills these guys then they will receive 50 gold per person.

“50 gold?”

The guild member Nolan murmured with surprised eyes.

“If you’re still worried then I’ll request Pegasus as backup.”

“But it’s better to report to Sir Alan first.....”

“Do you think I’m just Alan’s follower? Can’t I decide anything by myself?”

Andel snarled and glared at the guild.

“There’s no time. I don’t know when these guys will leave Nagaran. If he knows that the opponent is Ark then Alan won’t have a problem with it. I’ll take all responsibility so quickly make the preparations!”

“.....I understand.”

The guild member broke the contact and mobilized the emergency contact line. At the same time, a bat attached to the window grinned and flew into the sky. The bat flew through the evening sky until it reached Ark’s camp nestled in the woods. The shadow was Dedric! Dedric perched on Ark’s shoulder and said in a voice filled with laughter.

“Kikikik, Master. That dumb child is making preparations to kill you.”

“Okay, the prey has bitten the bait.”

Yes, this was Ark’s plan. Andel wasn’t likely to be alone. After leaving the village, he secretly summoned Dedric and ordered him to keep watching Andel. At the same time, he contacted Hermes and asked them to have a guild battle with Grey Wings. Therefore Andel could attack Ark with ease. Andel was irrational and moving like he expected.

“The preparations to catch the rat are finished.”

“Andel.....is only a warm-up.”

JusticeMan grinned and replied.

“Everybody move carefully. It will become troublesome if they notice and run away.”

A group of soldiers moved silently through the dense woods and gathered in one place. It was Andel and the ghost guild Hades. Although he used the emergency contact line, he was only able to gather 100 members in 20 minutes. But against 15 people, that was more than enough.

‘I’m not going to miss this time.’

Andel glared at the campfire visible in the distance. He had been humiliated in Cairo one month ago! He couldn’t forget the humiliating scene of Ark and the rehabilitation members surrounding him and using scrolls before killing him.

‘This time I’ll carve a memory that you won’t be able to forget into you!’

100 people were gathered so it was natural for him to win. The question was how to kill them. Although he couldn’t use scrolls because of the rules of Nagaran, he would use every method to give them a shameful death! Andel moved his troops and surrounded the camp carefully. In the distance, the form of 10 people could be seen between the flickering lights.

‘Huhuhu, those disgraceful guys just leisurely chatting without knowing that they’re going to die soon…….’

“Now. Attack!”

100 Hades members rushed the camp while shouting wildly. The ten people in the garrison flinched and turned their heads. And in the next moment, they fell to the ground and waved their hands frantically. It was crazy. While they were lying down on the ground, they just disappeared into the earth.

“What, what the?”

“Did they just burrow through the ground run away?”

“They also have burrowing skills?”

The guild members looked at the mounds of earth with astounded eyes. However, they couldn't afford to be surprised. 15 torches soon flew through the darkness from the top of the hill. The torches fell onto piles of twigs placed around the campsite. They fell onto oil with flames quickly spreading everywhere.

"Huk, f-fire!"

"It is a trap!"

The guild members became surprised and fled in every direction. The health of the guild members near the flaming branches quickly decreased.

-You have received 300 fire damage.

-Under the 'Burn' status, you will receive 10 damage every 10 seconds for 1 minute.

-You have caught on fire and your cloth and leather armour will have its defense reduced by 20% for 10 minutes.

"Oh my God!"

"What in the world is this?"

"Hahaha, you rookies. This is because of fire attack!"

Then, a massive body appeared on the hill. JusticeMan! That's right. JusticeMan was the one who thought of all these strategies. Using fire to attack was a fairly advanced strategy that not many users could put into action. It was a skilful thing to be able to think of using physical laws to deal damage to the opponent. But JusticeMan had led one of South Korea's SWAT teams. He was talented enough to memorize and implement several highly advanced strategies.

Thanks to New World, he got a chance to use the highest level skills in the 'Tactics III' textbook. And because the reformed thieves voluntarily obeyed him, his skills kept on climbing. JusticeMan also received a title for the first time.

You have received the title of 'Great Commander' from the subordinates who follow you.

You have built a lot of experience and have reached the level of Great Commanders in tactical combat operations. You will be able to conduct your allies with more precision while making the opponents even more confused. A Great Commander will improve the survival rate of his allies. Those who know you as a Great Commander will send you overwhelming support.

* As a title bonus all stats will increase by 2.

* A 50% bonus to the reliability of your subordinates is applied.

* Fame has increased by 500.

* The attack, defense and hit ratio of your allies as well as the success rate of the operation will increase by 10%.

* As a Great Commander you can use various strategies, with 100% damage added to the general damage.

<Corresponding Strategy: Cutting off water supply, Fire attack, Ambush, Surprise attack, Rushing, Scattering and Siege tactics.>

The additional bonus of 'Tactics III' piled up.

In a group battle, the bonus was applied to those who changed professions and well as the unemployed. And in the case where skill effect of the attack leader and unit commander was the same, according to the rule the skill with the more advanced level was applied. Therefore, JusticeMan's tactics skill was applied to Dark Eden's attacks. JusticeMan use his tactics skill to plan the strategy that would be the most effective.

The raccoons disguised themselves and run away by burrowing through the ground when Andel approached. The troops from Dark Eden were waiting on top of the hill to use the fire attack. Since JusticeMan received the title of Great Commander, the effect was enormous. The common chemicals could confuse the enemy but it wouldn't do that much damage. However, under the Great Commander the strategy was enough to deal fatal damage.

"It will cause quite a sting."

"Where did you learn nonsense like this.....!"

Andel shouted in a loud voice.

"Brace yourself, they don't have that many people so just ignore the fire damage. Decrease their numbers by sheer force!"

Andel climbed up the hill leading his guild. However, trees started rolling down the hill before they could completely climb it. The raccoons had prepared it in advance using the 'Wood Harvesting' skill. Thanks to that, the members of Hades guild had their health steadily drained.

“Those bastards! Warriors, press forward and push them back!”

The warriors built a shield after Andel’s command and stopped the trees. Then JusticeMan smiled and raised his voice.

“Ark, it’s your turn!”

“All troops load you cannons!”

40 soldiers suddenly sprang from the side. The whole group was composed of thieves and raccoons. Ark was already aware of the weaknesses of NPCs after the first time he led them. The weak point was that if the NPC died once then they were gone forever!

Of course, he was prepared for sacrifices during the siege but he wanted to increase the survival rate as much as possible. So he came up with the method of teaching the NPCs ‘Cannon Shooting.’ Ark used the funds from the rehabilitation group to commission plenty of cannons from the raccoons. Unfortunately, Cross’ party and the Meow couldn’t learn it since they were limited by their profession. But the thieves were still unemployed so 30 of them mastered the skill ‘Cannon shooting.’ It was also possible to utilize unemployed people.

Tu tu tu tung!

The 40 soldiers fired the guns at the warriors. Even though it was block by the shield, the cannons still had the destruction option. The durability of the shields quickly fell until the warriors couldn’t use it anymore.

‘Fighting the warriors isn’t necessary. Since the craftsmen NPC mixed the powder together, the effect has increased!’

This was information he learnt from leading the raccoons in the Underground World. Andel’s whole body trembled as he shouted.

‘Dammit, dammit, dammit! Why do these fellows always interfere when I’m about to kill that guy? What are these guys? This time I won’t just give up! Ignore the cannons and attack! Kill that guy!’

Andel rushed in blindly with his guild. Since the NPCs were equipped with cannons, they would find it difficult to fight against the Hades guild.

‘If I think about the siege then protecting the NPCs is the top priority!’

“It’s Hyung-nims’ turn!”

"Yes, I was waiting for it!"

"Gather your courage. The earth is your friend and will always protect you."

The rehabilitation members' defense rose thanks to Roco's 'Protection Song.' Ark also raised their stats and courage using 'Nursing.' Thanks to the overlapping buffs, their defense rose rapidly. Meanwhile, the warriors had just managed to reach the top of the hill.

"Bastards, go to hell!"

"Riposte!"

Ark blocked the sword of a warrior.

"Summon Demon, Deimos! Use your defensive stance and attack the enemy!"

Clack clack clack!

And he immediately used his 'Intimidation' skill.

"Where are you swinging your sword so arrogantly? You're just like a Salrabi Eurachacha!"

The guild member became stiff and stopped his rush. However, it was only a beginner skill while the Hades member was level 130.

"What the? Do you want to eat shit? Shut your dirty mouth."

"Shall we finish this?"

"My hair shrivelled from listening to such bad words. Kill this guy!"

Ark was immediately surrounded by 10 people from the guild.

"Aren't you acting rashly because of some rude words? I'll make shabu-shabu out of you and eat it. These beep-beep bastards!"

A different standard of swearing emerged from behind Ark. The people listening could only hear an endless stream of abusive language! Combined with the menace contained in his voice, the guild members couldn't help flinching and stiffening their bodies. Hae Gyeol-sa threatened them with his advanced intimidation skill. The skill of the founder was indeed different.

"Amazing. Making 20 people stiffen at once.....!"

Ark looked at Hae Gyeol-sa with admiring eyes. However, that wasn't the only surprise. 100 versus 83. The number was similar but Ark had the burden of protecting the NPCs. The Meow and Cross' soldiers were stationed in the back which was why only Ark and the rehabilitation members engaged the warriors. Of course it wasn't an easy battle. Since they hadn't fought together for a while, he had no idea about the combat capability of JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group.

The rehabilitation members also didn't have a profession yet and just fought in their own style. But when they used their unique skills then the situation completely changed. They were able to learn those skills because they were unemployed so it was a strange battle style!

'I was worried about their levels.....but I never thought the battle would be like this!'

Bul-kkun preferred building up his power and hitting. So he trained his body.....so after several months, he raised his body's defense by 50% and learnt the unique skill 'Impenetrable Skin.' With the addition of his high quality equipment, his defensive abilities were unimaginable.

"Hahaha, is that it? I don't even feel a tingle!"

Bul-kkun was able to fight against 3~4 people alone. On the other hand, as an ex-conman Jjak-tung used 'Fraud' and 'Art of Communication' to create a skill called 'Quarrel.'

"Hey, didn't Andel say something like he just had to feed you to obtain your dog like loyalty? Aren't you just cannon fodder? Look, Andel is telling you to attack while he's just watching from behind."

"S-shut up, ooooooh.....!"

The warriors became confused by 'Quarrel' and swung their swords wildly. However, none of them could compare to the deviant character of Tazza.

Tazza raised his character in a way that Ark couldn't imagine. Since he was a former gambler, he invested a lot of points into luck. Thanks to that, his strength and stamina were only around level 70~80 when his actual level was 100. On the other hand, he had 500 points in luck. It was a really abnormal character! In the beginning it was a useless character. However once it crossed 500 then he gained an unimaginable ability.

His luck stat now had an influence on his evasion and critical hit probability. With his high level equipment, Tazza's evasion and critical hit probability just increased

even more. Thanks to that, Tazza could avoid most attacks when counterattacking with a critical hit.

“Hey, I’m over here. Stupid!”

Tazza rushed forward and received all the attacks. If it hit then he would’ve received 800 damage. But he avoided most of the attacks and had to drink even less recovery potions than Bul-kkun.

But the most helpful person was none other than the former pickpocket Yapsab. Ark attacked 10 people until his health decreased to 30%.

“Eat this!”

Yapsab watched from afar and suddenly threw a recovery potion. After a lot of practice, Yapsab learnt the skill ‘Throwing Potions.’ When the potion vial broke and it touched Ark then his health was restored. While money was a problem, the skill was similar to having a priest as an ally. It was skills that people couldn’t get if they just trained conventionally. While the rehabilitation members had played around in the beginning, eventually they raised characters that suited their dispositions.

Ark and the rehabilitation members attacked from the front while the NPCs shot from behind.

The Hades guild eventually collapsed one by one. Since they were hastily summoned they couldn’t prepare a lot of potions. Andel shouted after half his guild had died.

“Send a distress signal to Pegasus!”

It was Andel’s last resort! One of the guild members shot a flare into the sky. Alan had created a new ghost guild Pegasus which Andel had waiting nearby. Although it was a small guild with only 50 people, it would be enough to turn the situation around. After a while, the sound of 50 users running through the woods was heard. Andel’s face brightened.

‘That’s it. Ark! No matter how much you try, you’re in the palm of my hand!’

“Really?”

Ark smiled and shrugged. Andel’s eyes widened as he saw the players that were approaching.

The crest on the arriving player's chest was not the winged horse symbol of Pegasus. It was a silver moon! The Silver Moon was a guild allied with Hermes who was chasing Andel. Thanks to Dedric, Ark already knew about his plan and set up an ambush with Silver Moon at the place where Pegasus was gathered. Andel finally realised the situation.

"You, you.....bastard. Don't tell me the Hermes guild....."

"Don't you understand yet? Don't tell me I'm smarter than you?"

"Son of a bitch!"

Andel rushed forward and tried to attack him. However, Andel was already no match against Ark. He mercilessly kicked him! Andel flew backwards from the kick and was stunned. The moment Andel flew back, his guild members began to flee in different directions. But Silver Moon had been waiting for this moment for 3 weeks. They blocked the escape in an orderly fashion and took care of the remnants.

"Now, what should I do with you?"

Ark pushed his face in front of Andel's nose.

"You.....you bastard.....! Don't think that this is the end of it....."

"Thank you. I have no intention of finishing it like this."

Once again Andel was flattened into a rice cake by Ark.

Act 8: Defense Tower Defeated

"That stupid child!"

Alan's face lit up with annoyance. Just a moment ago, an NPC in charge of the siege came to Alan.

"According to the news I just received, Hades guild master Andel has died and 60% of the guild has been lost as well. In accordance to the rules of the Shrine of War, Hades' challenge right has been revoked. As your veto right will disappear tomorrow, the guild selected for the siege will be chosen by the shrine."

Andel had made such an uproar that he had entrusted the ghost guild to him. Alan asked him to not do anything stupid until the territory stabilized.....but he caused an accident after all. Thanks to that, he now had to take part in the siege.

“Doesn’t he know how much money it takes to survive a siege?”

“But this is normal.”

Lariette said in a depressed voice from beside him.

“What?”

“Frankly, using the ghost guild to avoid the siege warfare.....it’s just tricking people in order for you to keep eating. In addition, the basement underneath the castle.....I get goose bumps whenever I go in there. Even though it is a game.....”

Alan banged on the table and yelled.

“What is so disagreeable? This is not just a simple game! It is the company entrance examination for us! And it is thanks to me that Lariette is being considered at all!”

“But.....”

“Now stop it! If you continue to question me then I won’t tolerate it. How many times have I told you? If you want to get a job at Global Exos then just continue following me!”

Lariette tried to move her lips before sighing and turning away.

“.....Since we’re taking part in the siege this time, I’ll convene all the allied guilds.”

When Lariette exited, Alan looked at the NPC with petulant eyes.

“So what guilds are participating in the siege this time?”

“The person who has received the challenge right is Ark, the leader of an attack group called Dark Eden and his allies.”

“Ark?”

Alan confirmed the documents in a surprised voice. Ark was also in an alliance with the Hermes guild. Alan could roughly guess the situation from that. No matter how stupid he was, Andel wouldn’t have blindly led the Hades guild outside. It was clearly Ark behind the situation. Because Andel was in the way of the

siege. Although he didn't know how Ark joined hands with Hermes, his final goal was clearly Alan.....

'That conceited child, should we end it here?'

The reason Alan created the ghost guild to avoid the sieges was not because of his lack of confidence. A proper siege required a lot of funds. But Alan was currently building up the territory, so the incoming tax was poured into road and land development. Because Silvana was still under development, the castle was lacking in money. He could not afford a siege since he had nothing to spare from the castle's income.

'Damn, I shouldn't have believed in Andel. Now I have to work urgently. Although Dark Eden is just composed of a few trivial fellows, the Hermes guild isn't an easy opponent. If they manage to take away this castle then everything is finished. I've poured a lot of money into allied guilds to maintain the relationship with them.....If that Ark guy knows about the secrets of this castle then my support base from the Cathedral will also come to an end.'

Alan had invested everything into Silvana. If he was beaten here then Alan would just become an ordinary user. It is already 80% confirmed that he would pass the examination and join Global Exos.

"It absolutely can't happen!"

Silver Moon, Noel, Hamanechi, Fugetsu.....along with Hermes, that was 5 guilds in the Hermes alliance and with Dark Eden it was 1,600 people. With the addition of 200 hired mercenaries then they had 1,800 people. The average level in Hermes was 170, with Raiden, Jewel, Duke and several other pioneers around 180. The deputy leader of the Silver Moon guild was level 150. Noel and Hamanechi averaged 140 while Fugetsu had an average level of 130. While Ark was level 159, Dark Eden's average level was between 110~120. Thanks to that, the Hermes alliance didn't like the idea of joining with Dark Eden. Anyway, they all gathered in one spot at a wide plain covered in black. The siege would take place in 1 hour so Raiden called all the guild masters together.

"We have 1,800 troops. Alan and the Dawn Blade coalition only have 1,700 people. The average level of Dawn Blade when they occupied the castle was 145. Since I haven't seen them leaving the castle, it should still be at a similar level. In conclusion, we have the edge in both numbers and levels."

Raiden explained in a tone that was assured of victory.

"Since they're challenge partner suddenly changed, they won't be prepared properly. Well, even if I don't explain it you know how difficult a siege is. If this fails then it might take a few months or even months to gather sufficient power again. In addition, it gives the opportunity to the Grey Wings to take Alan's power. No matter what, this siege has to be successful. If you participate in the siege then I'll honour the price I set, so please do your best."

"Don't worry."

"We have been waiting a couple of weeks for this day."

"Then I'm going to explain the strategy."

Raiden placed a map on a table and explained.

"You might already know this but the first barrier we must get past is the Defense Tower."

Raiden indicated to two towers located on both sides of the castle. It was an old artifact that existed in every castle to protect it. It would grant a bonus to the Lord's side during the siege, such as raising morale and courage, or increasing the maximum value of hired NPCs or other various effects. As an aside, but the shield that protected Jackson from the turrets in the past was also an artifact.

Silvana's artifact was a defense tower! It gave a shielding effect to the walls, and it also continuously recovered the durability of the walls.

"The Defense Tower is a grade A.2 artifact so if we don't defeat it in the time limit then the walls would be difficult to crack. In general, we should enter the castle within 18 hours for the siege to be a success. If we take into account the time taken to destroy the walls after defeating the defense tower, we have to destroy the defense tower within 14 hours."

Raiden immediately divided his forces. The strongest forces from Hermes and Silver Moon will attack the castle. They would occupy the main forces. Noel and Hamanechi will attack the right defense tower while Fugetsu and Dark Eden will

take care of the left. Since the Dawn Blade coalition will also arrange their troops at the defense tower, the battle will be spread out over 3 areas.

‘That Raiden.....’

A frown appeared on Ark’s forehead. Hermes and Silver Moon were going to attack the castle. But the next strongest guilds Noel and Hamanechi were grouped together while the weakest groups Fugetsu were together. It was a plan which ignored the balance of power. Raiden was probably already determined to abandon Fugetsu and Dark Eden. The guild master of Fugetsu also realised this but couldn’t raise an objection. He was a weak person after all.

‘Well, okay. Because it is a burden if I expect too much.’

Raiden finished the organization of the troops and distributed supplies to the allied guilds. The Hermes guild had agreed to share the proceeds of the occupied castle if they won at the end of the siege. Therefore it was customary in a siege to provide military supplies to the allied guilds. Thanks to the contract, Ark also received 100 Low-level recovery potions and 100 intermediate recovery potions. 10 repair boxes were also given.

‘Huhuhu, what kind of luck is this?’

Thanks to the money from the rehabilitation members, Dark Eden had plenty of supplies. Ark boldly grabbed the 100 intermediate potions and deluxe repair boxes. Although he knew about it from the day he signed the contract, the windfall was better than expected!

‘This is worth around 2000 gold in the stores!’

Since it was a big situation, the scale was also different. Even though it was a bad action, Ark didn’t hesitate. Then the sound of a horn rang from the Shrine of War and a NPC’s voice was heard.

“From now on I declare this place the siege area! Aside from the people participating in the siege, nobody can approach this area until the siege ends in three days!”

Ku Ku ku kung!

At the same time, a giant hourglass filled with sand started moving. It was 3 days in New World, so the amount of sand in that hourglass signalled 24 hours in reality.

“Please ready the siege weapons. Archer unit, protect the serious illness unit!”

As soon as the NPC's words ended, Hermes made the first strike. The catapult approached the walls with a heavy sound. A catapult was a siege weapon that could only be manufactured in an ironworks in a large city. It probably cost hundreds of gold for one and they had 20! They must have invested thousands of gold on siege weapons to break the walls. There were also the supplies given to the allied guilds.....the survival of the guild was really hanging on this. Well, Ark just thought that it was foolish to waste money on things like that.....

Anyway, numerous arrows and rocks flew towards the walls. But the walls' durability didn't even decrease. Instead, the arrows were reflected back and damaged the archers of the Hermes guild and their allies. This was the effect of the Defense Tower.

"The troops will advance first. Don't rest until the protection of the Defense Tower is destroyed.

So the long siege began.

"To the Defense Tower!"

The Fugetsu guild master shouted as he ran ahead. He pointed towards a crystal tower enclosed in light in the centre of a small castle on the hill. The Fugetsu guild master Baron lifted his sword and shouted.

"An all-out attack!"

"Wait a minute!"

Ark stopped Baron with an astounded face.

"What the?"

"The Defense Tower is an important part of Silvana's protections. Wouldn't they naturally have some preparations? But without understanding the enemy's power you're just going to assault them head on?"

"Have you ever participated in a siege before?"

"This is my first time."

"Then don't talk when you know nothing about it."

This guild master was different from the guy who couldn't even open his mouth in front of Hermes and just continued chattering. Ark seemed quite insignificant to him. Indeed, he only had a total of 83 troops. And 70 of them were NPCs. In addition, the NPCs didn't look like much with thieves wearing leather armour, hired soldiers, the Meow warriors and the raccoon clans. While it was the weakest of the Hermes allied guilds, the Fugetsu guild still have 250 people.

Baron increased the power in his neck and said.

"Anyway, the defense tower is just a skirmish. Alan won't have that much protection on it. In the previous sieges, the guild occupying the castle never assigns a lot of troops here. See, there aren't that many troops visible. There should only be around 50 soldiers here."

"But still, we should reduce the possible damage....."

"Do you think this is a war movie? We have the advantage in numbers and levels anyway."

Baron looked at Ark before laughing and ignoring him.

"Although the people with low level and equipment would have to use those sorts of cheap tricks.....if you're unconfident then please retreat. Because I don't expect that much from Dark Eden. Warriors forward!"

"Wha ah ah ah ah ah!"

At Baron's command, the warriors rushed forward with their shields in front of them. At the moment something iron sprang from the ground with a whirring sound. The sharp points penetrated the foot and came out the other side! The warriors stiffened and became paralyzed from the venom.

"Tr-trap!"

Baron's lips contorted before he issued a command.

"Sheesh, such a bother. Priests, use detoxification!"

But before the order could be completed, small mounds 100 metres away opened revealing small windows. They weren't small mounds but bunkers that had been created artificially. Dozens of arrows flew continuously from the window.

“Cough, I’m going to die without even swinging my sword....!”

The warriors who were caught by the paralysis poison became like a porcupine and collapsed.

“Eat this! Warriors detour and charge!”

Baron shouted. But the result was the same. In addition to the front, traps were tightly laid out 100 metres from the tower in every direction. The same scene seemed to be on repeat, with warriors rushing forward blindly before being caught by the paralysis poison and falling in vain to the arrows. Baron’s face was red with embarrassment.

“Oh my god, they’re all around.....!”

It was a minefield where they would be barraged from arrows the moment they stepped in.

‘That Alan.....he used his head to prepare for this.’

Ark’s eyes started to shine with a serious light. With the defense tower protected, it wasn’t necessary for Alan to go out and fight. With the protection from the defense tower, even the catapults wouldn’t be able to knock the walls down in the time limit. Alan just had to sit for 24 hours and the castle siege would end in vain. In that sense, the arrangement of the situation for the defense tower was quite ideal. It was a tightly oriented defense formation! It was like a situation in Star O where the Terrans laid mines in front of a bunker which caused a lot of confusion when the opponents ran in. There should be a method of intercepting it from far away.

However, the opponents were armed with longbows and crossbows that had a long range. Furthermore, they had the favourable geographical position of being on top of the hill. The opponents only had to place the crossbow out the window and shoot. Baron’s face became annoyed.

“These bastards.....what a lousy trick.....!”

He must be joking. Using strategies to prevent them from capturing the castle was a lousy trick?

“It’s not possible.” The arrows would just kill the warriors when they’re caught in the trap.

Eventually, the Baron would be forced into a prolonged war. But Ark viewed it a different way. There were some professions in the hunter system that could disable

traps. The traps were also established within the range of all the bunkers. Although they could block the arrows with their shields, the dozens of arrows that fell steadily would gradually decrease the warriors' health.

"Baron, it's impossible to hold out anymore!"

"1st line should retreat to recover. 2nd line protect the hunters!"

30 warriors retreated while others came forward holding shields. The traps were disabled one by one but Ark felt even gloomier. Although it had been one hour, the Fugetsu guild hadn't even managed to advance 2~3 metres. Using simple calculations, if it continued like this then it would take 30~50 hours to advance 100 metres.

'No wonder he placed so many archers.....'

There were a lot of archers placed at the Defense Tower so it was a natural result.

'In addition, dismantling the traps means being closer to the range of the arrows. It will also take a while to destroy the bunkers.....even if the pace quickens by 2~3 times, it still won't be finished by the end of today!'

Traps and bunkers were a simple but effective combination. Since the operation wasn't working, Baron glared at Ark.

"What is Dark Eden doing? Can't you see the situation at the moment?"

Ark replied in an uninterested tone.

"We don't have anyone who can release traps....."

"Then what about warriors with shields?"

"Didn't you say before that there was no need for us to help out?"

".....Then go ahead!"

Baron turned his head away. Of course, Ark wanted to quickly deal with the Defense Tower. But even if Cross supported Baron, the situation wouldn't change that much. Although they could use the shields to block, a lot of warriors from Fugetsu still died.

'I can't just leave it to Baron. I have to find a way myself.'

Even if only one defense tower was destroyed, he had confidence that Raiden would be able to destroy the walls in time using the catapults. Although the other side had the same numbers, their levels were higher. Therefore this side was insignificant to Raiden's siege strategy. But.....

'I should pay for my meal.'

Ark signed a contract with Raiden where he would receive 30% of the proceeds from the castle. In an alliance of 5 guilds, only Dark Eden received 30%. The only reason they accepted Ark was because he had the challenge right, but once they distributed the proceeds of the siege then it could cause problems. In fact, that was the day he dreaded the most.

"What do you think?"

"Let's see....."

JusticeMan who was the master of strategies sighed in frustration. The rehabilitation group couldn't speak. Although they were armed with various skills, it was useless in a battle like this. It was also beyond Cross' and the NPCs capacities.

"Ah, Oppa!"

Then, Roco clapped and looked at Ark.

"Do you remember the movie we saw together the other day?"

"Movie?"

Ark remembered and suddenly hit his knee. Then Ark and Roco shouted in unison.

"Ridge of Death!"

The Ridge of Death was a movie that he watched with Roco when JusticeMan tricked them last time. Roco was a girl and wanted to watch a romantic comedy but Ark refused. Details about a person's relationship. Why should he pay money to watch such a movie? He wouldn't watch it even if the money went bad. If he was going to waste money on a movie then it was better to relieve his stress by watching bombs detonate and missiles flying. So Ark ended up watching a movie called Ridge of Death.

.....It was a mistake!

Ark who had no interest in movies found a cinema showing war movies. But out of all things, it was a movie about the Vietnam War with modern tanks and

missiles.....Thanks to that, Ark and Roco dozed in the movie theatre for 2 hours. The worst date!

But there were a few memorable scenes from the movie. In the final part of the movie, the US military forces built bunkers and land mines in order to stop the charge of the Viet Cong. But in the end, the US army lost the high ground in vain. Only the main character barely survived. Currently Ark's position in the situation was reversed! Then, how did the Viet Cong manage to attack.....eh?

"How did they do it? What method?"

Ugh, damn it. He just had to be dozing during that scene! But fortunately Roco watched it as well.

"That's it. The Viet Cong used that method. Then....."

"Heh, those pathetic guys."

"Look at them trying to cancel the traps.....it's going to take them 3 nights and 4 days."

"We just have to sit here and enjoy the show to the end."

Inside the bunker there were 20 archers sitting and yawning. The Defense Tower was attacked first in the siege. They had to defend this place even if they died. Before the siege started, they were quite tense and couldn't sleep but now it was quite boring. All they had to do was sometimes shoot the crossbow from inside the bunker. It didn't even feel like they were in the middle of a siege.

"Even if I end up dying in a fight, at least it would be more interesting than this....."

"I agree."

"Ah, we've been sitting for 6 hours and now I'm sleepy. Does anyone want coffee?"

One archer scratched his head and turned around. Shakes shake, all of a sudden the ground in the centre of the bunker started to become restless.

“What the, what’s happening here?”

The archer asked puzzled. And when he touched the earth it started to move up and down. Suddenly loud shouts erupted from underneath the ground.

“Blade Storm!”

Bang bang double bang!

Numerous scraps of iron emerged from the earth and caused a tornado in the bunker. The archer who was there lost 40% health while the other archers lost 20%. The archers who were staring outside turned their heads and looked at the unbelievable sight.

“What, what the?”

“What the hell.....eh? W-who are you?”

The storm had passed. The hazy form of one person was standing within the dust. With his whole body covered in dirt.....it was Ark!

“Is it an enemy? H-how.....?”

“Do you know how much I suffered having to eat dirt?”

“A-attack!”

The archers focused their crossbows on Ark. As soon as they tried to pull the trigger, earth and sand exploded in front of them. A pair covered in black appeared and grabbed their collars. They were two fierce looking rehabilitation members, JusticeMan and Gyeong Saeng-dan.

“You thought a fight would be more interesting?”

“Then how about you fight us?”

There was an explosion at the same time. That wasn’t all. From the hole in the floor, dozens of soldiers came pouring out.

“Hahaha, we found them!”

“Taste the sword of justice!”

It was Cross and the Sylphid Knights, as well as the thieves.

“Huk, there are so many guys from underground.....!”

The archers immediately panicked. JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members were experts at fighting, and in the small space of the bunker there was nowhere for the archers to run. In addition, there was also Cross and the Sylphid Knights. The thieves were also good at melee combat and used their knives skillfully. Furthermore, it was 30 against 73! The archers weren't able to shoot their arrows properly.

“It is all under control.”

JusticeMan ended the battle by sending the last archer to the underworld.

‘The archers were a pretty easy opponent.’

The battle was too easy to the point that he considered it boring.

‘It took 5 hours to get here.....it took longer than expected but it's not too bad!’

A smile spread on Ark's mouth. He had obtained this hint from the movie Ridge of Death. The Viet Cong who struggled to occupy the higher ground eventually used a last resort.

Because they couldn't approach the higher ground with the machine guns and mines, the Viet Cong decided to use their specialty and dig. After a long time and various sacrifices, a tunnel was dug underneath the bunker and the US forces in the bunker were surprised and destroyed. Once he heard this, the racial skill of the raccoons immediately came to Ark's mind. Didn't the raccoons also have the ability to dig tunnels like the Viet Cong?

“It seems possible. Let's give it a try.”

Ark told the raccoons who immediately started digging the tunnel. The raccoon clan can move through the ground like a mole. But if the NPC craftsmen appeared inside the bunker then they would just be turned into porcupines. Because other people could use the tunnels, it took longer to create a 100 metre long tunnel. Even though the rehabilitation members and Ark were used to carry the soil, it still took 5 hours.

It was the Viet Cong strategy! Well, the results were obvious.....the Meow refused to crawl through the ground, but even without the Meow warriors they still managed to handle 30 archers.

'That boring movie was actually helpful. I should watch movies with Roco more often in the future.'

Ark looked out the bunker window to examine the situation. He could grasp the situation outside even from here. Baron and his guild were still unaware of the shovelling.

'Huhuhu, Baron please suffer more.'

Until he controlled the rest of the bunkers, Dawn Blade couldn't know what was happening. In the Viet Cong strategy, until they seized two bunkers they had to be careful of security because if the enemy becomes aware then there is a chance of a counterattack. Therefore, Ark concealed it from Baron and dug the tunnel.

'The next bunker is 60 metres away. It should take 3 hours judging by the current pace.'

"Rest here for the moment. The raccoon are tired as well."

The NPCs working with users had to rest. Ark allowed the raccoons to rest for 2 hours inside the bunker before rushing them to start digging again. After 3 hours, the tunnel to the next bunker was completed.

"Hahaha, everyone attack!"

Ark's party beat the archers to death.

"Now there are only the soldiers that are defending the tower."

Ark immediately gave orders to the raccoons and thieves.

"Take 20 people each and divide them between both bunkers!"

Ark left the raccoons and thieves in the two bunkers. Then a 40 foot cannon emerged from the bunker and started shooting continuously. When the cannon started shooting from where they believed their allies were, the soldiers who protected the tower suffered enormous damage. The soldiers who barely survived couldn't understand the situation.

"What's going on? Why is our bunker shooting us?"

"What is this bullet? Huk, is this damage a joke?"

"Our guys in the bunker aren't responding to the Feathers of Whispering."

“Was their connection lost?”

“Oh my God, did they snatch away the bunker?”

“It’s coming from the bunker within range! I’m not going to stand here and let them exterminate me. Destroy the bunker!”

The soldiers from the castle flocked to the bunker. However, a huge amount of money was spent on the bunkers to prevent an attack from the Hermes guild. Its durability didn’t decrease no matter how much they struck it. Meanwhile, 2 people died from one bullet that came from the bunker. Eventually the soldiers had been decreased by 30 people and the doors of the bunker opened, with a group of soldiers immediately rushing out. It was Ark, the rehabilitation members, Cross.....it was the Dark Eden attack group.

“Now it is time for battle. Make sure you put your whole body into it!”

The health of Dawn Blade had already decreased by 50%. Meanwhile, Dark Eden had rested comfortably inside the bunkers. JusticeMan rushed forward while Ark kicked the opponents. The Dawn Blade guild became even more confused. Thanks to the rehabilitation members’ odd skills and the attack from the NPCs, the opponents collapsed from the confusion. However, in this situation the most confused man was none other than Fugetsu’s guild leader Baron.

“Eh? How did he get over there?”

They’ve been marching for 11 hours! Although he hurried his guild who kept on complaining, they only advanced 40 metres. But then all of a sudden Ark showed up on the other side of the traps. And he immediately seized the Defense Tower. Fugetsu’s guild members who had been marching tirelessly looked at their guild master with soulless expressions.

‘What did we do all that for?’ their looks seemed to say.

“What’s with that guy?”

However, no one answered Baron’s question.

A Defense Tower has been destroyed.

There is a 50% decrease in the shield applied to the castle. The recovery rate of the durability of the walls has been decreased by 50%.

“That’s it!”

Raiden clutched his fist tightly and shouted. He checked the hourglass and saw that 12 hours has passed. It was 2 hours faster than expected.

‘The heavens are helping me!’

While the Defense Tower existed, it was extremely difficult to break the walls. His previous attacks weren’t intended to break the castle walls. It was meant to prevent them from sending reinforcements to the Defense Towers. Therefore Raiden didn’t attack using all his force and just stood at a distance shooting arrows. However, it was different if one Defense Tower was destroyed.

‘It is clearly the Noel and Hamanechi guilds. Fugetsu and Dark Eden are probably still wandering. Well, I don’t care. Because I did not expect anything anyway. But if one of the defense towers are destroyed then there will be no trouble breaking down the walls in time!’

“Now! Summon the stone-throwing golems!”

“Great power of the earth, follow your Lord’s command!”

The summoners in Hermes immediately followed Raiden’s order and give huge golems rose from the ground.

“Huk, Golems!”

A scream rang from the walls. The giant golem was level 180! It was an advanced summoning that was impossible unless they were a pioneer! Although it was only 5 golems, they were rarely seen in New World. The range of the stone throwing golems was short but their power was incredible. The golems stomped forward and started throwing rocks at the wall. It was an incredible offensive attack!

Since the protection of the shield was cut in half, the durability of the walls started to decrease. The 20 catapults also attacked along with the golems. On the other hand, the Dawn Blade guild had a lot of their archers assigned to the defense towers! Therefore they had no way of stopping the attacks from the golems.

“Hahaha, how is it? This is the power of Hermes!”

Raiden was bragging when something suddenly happened. The castle gates opened and hundreds of users poured out.

“Everyone attack! Don’t let them break down the walls!”

“Don’t pay any attention to those guys. Attack the catapults and the summoners of those golems!”

“If the walls are destroyed then it is the end!”

“Don’t be afraid of death!”

The Dawn Blade members brandished their swords and magic and rushed towards the catapults and summoners. However, Raiden just laughed.

“Ha, do you think you can beat Hermes in a direct confrontation? Since the defense tower collapsed, reinforcements will also be coming soon.”

Currently the Hermes guild gathered in front of the castle had 900 troops after sending the rest to the defense towers. Meanwhile, the Dawn Blade guild had 1,200 people. The Hermes guild was inferior in terms of numbers. However, Raiden actually welcomed the enemy’s attack. The Hermes guild was filled with pioneers. The Silver Moon guild was also equal to Hermes. Their levels, equipment and skills weren’t at a level that normal users could beat. Raiden had hoped for this head-on collision!

“It is time to show the power of the Hermes Alliance! Trample them!”

The sound of two armies colliding was heard. However, the result was different from what Raiden expected.

“What, what? These guys?”

The coalition of guilds was stronger than he expected. The difference in skills and equipment wasn’t as much as he expected. In fact if he knew the true identity of Dawn Blade then it wasn’t that surprising. Their true identities are candidates participating in the Global Exos examination. With a job at stake, they didn’t care about how much they invested in equipment.

“I was ignorant of the people gathered in Dawn Blade.....but it’s not just their equipment.”

If the equipment was similar then of course higher levels would dominate. And the levels in Hermes were the highest in New World. Even so, the battle became strained. Didn't that mean that the members of Dawn Blade are also at Hermes' level?

"How come? Weren't their levels lower than ours when they occupied the castle? It has been 3 weeks and I've never seen any of them leave the castle.....then how are their levels similar to ours?"

Raiden couldn't understand it.

"But we're still superior. We're pushing them back....."

Raiden was optimistic about the battle situation.

Dudududung, the sound of drums rang from the walls and someone exited the castle. He was riding a white horse with armour that shined.

"Alan!"

Raiden's eyes started flashing. It was the Lord of Silvana, Alan! Of course, even if Alan died the siege would still continue as long as Dawn Blade kept on fighting. But losing Alan would be a great blow to Dawn Blade. Although the battle situation wasn't disadvantageous, it was a golden opportunity for Raiden.

"What a foolish guy. The Lord actually appeared on the battlefield. Catch him.....Huk!"

Raiden had stood up and yelled. Then 20 troops riding behind Alan came pouring out. Horses cost thousands of gold. But he had enough for a horse unit! In addition, Raiden could even see equipment on the equestrian troops.

"When did he get those soldiers.....!"

"Kill Alan! Cough!"

Alan dealt huge damage because of the unique sword in his hand! The cavalry troops also followed swinging maces. The formation of the Hermes Alliance collapsed thanks to the cavalry unit. A formidable attacking power! But the problem wasn't simply attack power.

"Miracle Force! Heavenly Light! Holy Imprint!"

The aura applied to the unit stacked up three times thanks to Alan's profession, Holy Knight! Once Alan appeared on the battlefield, not only was there a rise in tactics but

also an increase in stats. In addition, the Holy Knight's skills didn't consume his mana so it wouldn't be turned off when his mana was low. The buff made a huge difference to the battlefield.

Bang bang double bang!

Alan's cavalry unit rode around attacking the summoners until the golems collapsed one by one.

"Curse, curse them!"

Raiden shouted as he emitted light. But the warlock's curse was blocked by Holy Imprint with 80% of it failing! And the 20% that worked was immediately lifted.

"What, what the? Holy magic? Then they're all Holy Paladins?"

It was a profession with mighty combat power and holy magic. It was a profession that required enormous luck to change into yet there were 20 of them! The moral of Dawn Blade shot up thanks to the cavalry unit.

"All the summoners have collapsed. Priests and magicians, concentrate your attacks on the catapults!"

"Warriors group up in units of 5 and your highest priority is to attack the priests!"

"Archers use your arrows to intercept the magicians' magic!"

"Debuff all of them!"

"Area of effect magic. Retreat from the range!"

Blood quickly rose to the pale sky before falling!

The momentum had suddenly shifted to the side of Dawn Blade. The cavalry unit was a natural enemy to magicians and priests. Thanks to their mobility they were able to attack several times faster! With the low defense of magicians and priests, they couldn't even last more than a few seconds. Meanwhile, the rest of Dawn Blade was decreasing the durability of the catapults.

"This, such a thing.....Pioneers stop the cavalry unit! The rest protect the catapults!"

Raiden shouted to his warriors. In this situation he was commanding from the rear of the troops. Then a cloud of dust was raised as a group of soldiers arrived.

"The Noel and Hamanechi guilds have returned!"

Raiden's face brightened. If the Noel and Hamanechi troops show up then the situation could be reversed! But when he checked he noticed something strange. He had thought that Noel and Hamanechi had destroyed the tower and was returning. However, the people who were leading the troops were Ark and Baron.

'What on earth..... the Defense Tower was destroyed.....it wasn't by Noel.....!'

It was actually Fugetsu and Dark Eden?

"No way? What the hell?"

Raiden was completely confused. But no matter the reinforcements, it was better than nothing.

"Baron, Ark! Attack Alan!"

Act 9: Caretaker of the Battlefield

Alan!'

Ark's eyes quickly looked around after hearing Raiden's voice. He was soon able to see Alan wielding his sword along with the cavalry troops in the middle of the battlefield.

'Okay, I won't stop until I take him out this time!'

"Dark Eden troops depart, attack Alan's unit!"

"Ah, Ark-nim. What about us?"

Baron asked in a surprised voice. After Ark led Dark Eden to destroy the Defense Tower, Baron's attitude had a complete 180 degree change. His personality was the type that would prostrate himself if he judged that someone was superior to him.

"Protect Raiden!"

Ark replied with annoyance and approached Alan's cavalry troops. Now that Alan appeared, he had no interest in Fugetsu. Alan was leading the 20 man cavalry unit as well as 100 soldiers through the battlefield. The pioneers including Jewel and Duke were confronting him. But even the pioneers of New World were pushed back by Alan and his cavalry unit.

“Ugh, what’s with these monster like fellows……!”

“Your best dark attribute magic only did 10% damage at most to them?”

“These bastards, what on earth are their levels?”

“All 20 paladins are wearing gloves that have recovery magic!”

Then Ark jumped into the battlefield leading Dark Eden.

“Sir Cross, you and your soldiers take up defensive stances and prevent enemy attacks! The raccoons and thieves, please shoot the enemies with cannons while supporting Sir Cross. Roco, assist from a distance! And JusticeMan ajusshi, Hyungs and the Meow……take care of the fighting!”

“Okay!”

Bang bang double bang!

When Ark’s troops stormed in, a violent sound was immediately heard. Thanks to the influence of JusticeMan’s Tactics III, the NPCs followed Ark’s commands perfectly.

“That fellow!”

Cross prevented the enemies’ offensive using the shield while pointing at a priest. A bullet flew 40 feet across the battlefield. Its damage couldn’t even be compared with normal arrows! It was difficult for even a warrior to endure without dying. Much less compared to the priest wearing robes with much lower defense. The priest’s health quickly reached the bottom and he collapsed.

“Huhuhu, the enemy won’t stop with just this! It reminds me of the time I was stranded in the middle of an uprising! Good, the more the better!”

“It reminds me of the incident in the nightclub.”

“It’s time to show our true characters! Come on……these beep-beep bastards!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members jumped into the battle with excited faces. But it was the Meow who went through a complete reversal. Ark had not seen the Meow fight yet. While the Meow clan fought in the battle against Debra, there was no chance for during when fighting Andel. The Meow also didn’t want to go underground so they did not participate in the destruction of the Defense Tower. The cat was a really selfish species, who he had only seen eating and eating……it was to the extent that Ark thought he brought them for no reason.

But that thought was completely blown away in this fight.

“Let’s show them why we’re called the best warrior beast species!”

“I’ll show you how an elegant cat fights.”

Suuk, sasasak, seokeok!

The Meows’ battle was truly phenomenal. They used incredibly quick foot movements that couldn’t be seen, and then avoided attacks using their flexibility before jumping across several metres to deal damage!

Yes, he had forgotten for a while-no, he just did not believe-but the Meow were descendants from Hero Maban! Once Ark switched jobs to Dark Walker, the skills he learnt were originally from the Meow. They were a naturally gifted warrior clan!

“Huhuhu, slow, slow, too slow!”

The Meow quickly avoided the sword and attacked in the weak spot. Ark looked for weaknesses using Eyes of the Cat. However, the Meow were the origin of the cat eyes. Even if they didn’t use the skill, the Meow could just look and they would see the weaknesses. In addition, they were born with Ark’s Cat Paws. Their sharpened nails pierced the areas that the armour exposed such as neck and wrist and tore the flesh.

“What, what the? Who are they?”

“What kind of NPCs are they? First there is the raccoons firing the cannons, and now isn’t that a cat?”

“What kind of quests would you have to do to be able to hire these mercenaries?”

It wasn’t only the people in Dawn Blade, but the Hermes Alliance was also watching in confusion. But the person who had the most brilliant performance was of course Ark!

‘The reward was worth going through all that trouble!’

Ark ran around the battlefield pushing back enemies. The Dawn Blade members mostly consisted of candidates. Only they would be so enthusiastic about the game. But he confirmed that they were only around level 150 using Eyes of the Cat. The highest level users were no more than level 150. On the other hand, Ark’s level was 159! With his darkness attribute bonus it was 222!

He was finally receiving some compensation for not sleeping a lot. Dying and then coming back to find yourself at a higher level than other users.....wasn't that a glorious moment for all users? Of course other professions had abilities that increased the stats or gave special effects, none of them could beat Ark in a 1-on-1 fight. With his dark attribute bonus, it wasn't even hard to fight 5 people at once. It was the result of grinding! And.....

'That warrior is using the skill Shield Shock!'

Once Ark saw the warriors pull their shields, he was able to read their attack patterns. Thanks to the Evil Silrion, he was able to see the skills of most professions and read their attacks by looking at the special movement. Ark reflexively closed the distance, avoided the shield and attacked at the weak point. After the practical training at the gym, his transitions were so fast and sharp it couldn't even be compared to before.

'In the past I didn't even dare fight against other candidates but now.....I've become stronger!'

He was stronger than other candidates. That meant he had a higher chance to pass the entrance examination. Since his confidence increased, Ark's movements became livelier. The battle situation once again became strained thanks to that. Alan became confused because he never thought that Dark Eden would have such achievements.

"Ugh, what on earth are these NPCs? Huh?"

Just then the sharp sparkle of a sword appeared in front of him. Alan reflexively lifted his sword and a sharp clanging sound rang out. 3~4 warriors died as he leapt forward and struck a blow on the shield. Rough curses flew from Alan's mouth as he confirmed who it was.

"Ark, you bastard.....!"

Ark had confirmed that it was Alan from a distance and ran towards him.

"Why are you surprised? You were the one who called me here. Isn't that right?"

"What are you saying?"

"Well? Didn't you 'dare' me to come here?"

"You cheeky bastard! Shield Blow!"

Alan ran to him with his shield raised. However Ark quickly lowered his body and counterattacked with Dark Blade. It signalled the start of the wild clash between Ark and Alan.

Holy Knight and Dark Walker!

Two people who walked the road in different directions yet they were destined to clash. No, if only the facts were looked at then Ark would be inferior in strength. Alan had always been ahead of him from the beginner so he was like a tough mountain pass Ark had to climb. But.....

‘Alan.....doesn’t seem as strong as I thought!’

After receiving Alan’s attack, Ark felt quite confident. As Dark Walker was a hidden profession, he received a 40% bonus in the dark which was something general users would have a hard time imagining. The bonus was how Ark had managed to defeat opponents a lot stronger than him. It was evening at the moment so the perfect for a Dark Walker.

However, Alan was not an ordinary user. He also had one of the hidden professions. Moreover, his character was that of a hero walking in the light. He also received a bonus of course. While Ark received a bonus in the dark, Alan received a bonus proportional to the number of troops he led. The more troops he commanded the higher his stats would rise. And if he was on a warhorse, there was a slight boost to his damage and defense. After the bonus stats were applied, they were almost equal! The rest of it was levels and skills!

‘Alan’s level is lower than mine!’

After checking with Eyes of the Cat, Alan’s level was surprisingly lower than Ark’s. Ark was level 159. Alan was level 158. At one time he was an opponent that Ark had to crane his neck to look up at. But after several months had passed, Ark was now ahead. It was an inevitable result. No matter how much bonuses and experiences he got from being in a party, Alan had focused on creating a guild and capturing the castle while Ark had only focused on hunting.

Ark had continued to hunt and hunt while sleeping less. Any turtle could overtake a rabbit if it was sleeping. Especially if the turtle had a motor attached to its foot!

‘I can win. I can take Alan down here!’

However, the situation was not as simple as he thought. It wasn’t a 1-on-1 fight but a bloody battlefield with hundreds of users. Unlike Ark, Alan also had strong support

in the form of his cavalry unit. If Ark pushed Alan back even a little bit then a cavalry member would rush over and attack.

“Ugh, what’s with these bastards……?”

Alan had stumbled after Ark kicked him in the knee. When he had the perfect opportunity for continuous attacks, the cavalry unit interrupted again. Meanwhile, the other paladin poured recovery magic at Alan. Of course Ark also had his health restored thanks to Roco’s help. Thanks to that both of them were unable to strike the killing blow.

‘Damn, this would normally be the time to use Blade Storm……’

In this melee it wasn’t as simple as it sounded. Ark’s ultimate skill was Blade Storm. When used correctly, its destructive power was enormous. But to use Blade Storm he had to take a sword out of his bag. And the preliminary action to trigger it was more time-consuming than his other skills. It wasn’t a skill that he could use against Alan.

‘I have to use a more advanced skill!’

If Alan saw any signs then he would immediately disrupt the offensive. Ark was the same as well. If he saw signs that Alan was using a dangerous skill then he would immediately disrupt it. Since they both had hidden professions, the power of their best skill would be unimaginable. In such a situation, the person who managed to use the skill would strike the killing blow. It was like they both had access to nuclear bombs but were fighting with rifles.

‘That Ark, when did he become this strong? It’s not simply a problem of his level. Something else……’

Alan was unclear about the situation. At that time, two unexpected variables entered the fight.

“God dammit, die! Burning Force!”

Jewel who was fighting the cavalry unit cast a spell. It was a powerful magic from a level 180 pioneer! However, it just bounced off the overlapping reflection shield that the cavalry troops created. The intention was probably to have the magic bounce off and hit the enemy troops. But ironically, the magic flew behind the enemy line to where Ark and Alan were having their bloody battle.

“Ah, Sir Alan!”

Alan reflexively raised a reflective shield after hearing the paladin's shout. It was an intense magic! It caused a violent impact which shook the shield.

'Ah!'

Alan shook and fell off his horse.

"It's a chance! That guy fell off his horse!"

"If we catch him then it's Hermes' victory!"

At the same time, the Hermes Alliance flocked at the opportunity. After the close fight with Ark, his health had fallen to 30%! Fortunately the 20 Holy Paladins stopped the Hermes Alliance and protected Alan. They had swift agility! However, Alan had no interest in the Hermes Alliance.

"Ark.....!"

Alan stiffened and turned his head. The person who was closely approaching.....his nemesis, Ark! During the confusion Ark didn't miss the opportunity.

'Thanks to the impact from falling off his horse, he must be stiff! In this situation he won't be able to disrupt my skill. There's also no time for the Holy Paladins to use their recovery magic! It is the ideal chance!'

Ark ignored the attacks flying around him and shouted.

"Snake, Magic Swords!"

He didn't want to give Alan a chance to use recovery magic. Ark used a magic sword just in case. It was a magic sword that could be sold for 10 gold in stores!

"Blade Storm!"

Cracks spread like a spider web on the 100,000 won magic sword. Alan instinctively sensed that he was in a crisis. A formidable amount of magic seemed to be emanating from the cracking sword! In this condition he would surely die! If he died here then he would lose the castle! Panic spread throughout his body and he instinctively grabbed the nearest user. At the same time, a surprised word emerged from Ark's mouth.

"La-Lariette!"

"Ark-nim?"

The person that Alan grabbed was Lariette of all people! Ark reflexively turned the sword. The users who were running on that side were unfortunately shredded by the 100,000 won Blade Storm. At that moment, Alan's eyes lit up.

"What a stupid guy, Grand Cross!"

After receiving the recovery magic from 20 people, Alan used the Holy Knight's strongest skill. Hundreds of lights shot from Alan's sword into the sky. And it created a huge cross made of swords which plunged towards Ark. It was a holy scene, but to Ark it appeared like a reaper was swinging a huge scythe at him. And just before the giant scythe was about to pierce his neck, an angel flew in front of him.

"No!"

With her long hair flying, it was Roco who jumped in front of Ark. The black light pierced through Roco and into the ground.

"R-Roco!"

"Ugh, our cutie!"

"Saint-nim! You.....you bastard.....!"

JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the thieves headed towards Alan furiously. However, the cavalry troops blocked them before they could reach Alan and Ark and a fierce battle took place. Ark turned his head slowly away from Roco with vacant eyes. Lariette looked at Ark with guilt.

"A, Ark-nim.....!"

"Damn, Grand Cross!"

"No!"

When Alan tried to use the skill again, Lariette shouted in surprise and grabbed his arm. Thanks to that it only skimmed Ark's side but he still lost 500 health just from that. However, the damage was not the problem. When the sword of light flew past, he had been surrounded by the cavalry troops. Ark was hit repeatedly and was forced to withdraw.

'Oh my God, I can't die here!'

"Slime's Time, NO1!"

Since Ark was in a critical condition, he regretfully used the skill.

‘Slime’s Time was something I learnt when I made the Slime’s Immortality Pill.’

It was a skill which could defend him from physical attacks by 100% for 10 minutes! When he used Slime’s Time, Ark’s body was immediately covered in a smooth viscous liquid. Then Ark managed to withdraw from the paladins. It was the perfect invincible state! Ark easily ran away from the maces flying all over the place. However, there was a penalty for using Slime’s Time. While it blocked attacks for 10 minutes, his sword couldn’t inflict any damage. Even though he could see Alan, it wasn’t possible for him to do anything. Meanwhile Alan got back on his horse and shouted.

“Concentrate everything on your attack! Their recovery priests have all died!”

“Alan.....!”

Ark was forced to just watch. While he had averted the attack on Lariette, he couldn’t forgive killing Roco.

‘But.....’

Ark wasn’t so stupid that he would just blindly run up to Alan. Roco died in the game, but if Ark died here then there was no way to recover the 5,000 gold. And.....even if it wasn’t Ark, there were already enough stupid people.

“Huk, drat. Dammit!”

Bul-kkun was impaled by a spear. In addition, Jjak-tung and Yapsab were also in a critical condition and close to dying. Thanks to their fury over Roco, they just fought randomly. But that wasn’t the problem. Roco was the only person who could use recovery magic in Dark Eden. With her ‘Gentle Reverberation,’ the recovery magic was even able to be stacked 3 times. After Roco died, Dark Eden was immediately on the defensive. 5 Sylphid Knights had already died while 4 Meow had collapsed. Thankfully the raccoons were still intact, but the thieves had rushed towards Roco and 12 of them died from the cavalry unit’s attack. Frankly, their deaths caused more pain to Ark than Roco’s did.

Roco would revive perfectly fine tomorrow. But once the NPCs died then it was the end. So he had put all the effort into building intimacy for nothing. But was that all? Ark was the one who dragged them into the battle. If they were all wiped out? While he wasn’t sure about the thieves, his intimacy with Jackson’s Lord, the Meow elders and the raccoon clan representatives would be negatively affected. No, there was no

need to think. When Dark Eden started to be pushed, the Hermes Alliance that had managed to maintain its balance started to wobble.

They didn't have a lot of recovery potions left. On the other hand, the 20 mounted troops could all use recovery magic.....

Nevertheless, Ark couldn't attack the enemies for 10 minutes.

'If the formation collapses then it is the end!'

"Huk, A-Ark.....!"

Then, Cross was struck by a critical hit and stumbled.

"Ah, no! Gather your energy! You might be tired but you still have strength left. Real courage isn't fighting for breath. Sometimes fighting to save lives is true courage! Wield your sword and shield to survive!"

Ark desperately used Nursing. Nursing was not recovery magic. But if the spirit and courage rose then it could increase the recovery rate. And the blessing would increase various resistances and stats which would make the survival rate a little bit higher. Ark ran around the entire battlefield using Nursing. He was immortal so none of the attacks could stop him. But once the battle situation was pushed then it started to get out of control. Although there was a difference in power, their health and recovery potions in the Hermes Alliance were starting to run low.

"Please gather your courage. You aren't supposed to collapse! We can win!"

So Ark used Nursing even when he got a sore throat.

Then.....a miracle literally happened!

The Miracle Nursing was successful.

You have understood the deep sorrow of the heart on the battlefield.

The battlefield is a trench of endless sins. In the place where the importance is placed on a sword and shield, you have used your power to heal the wounded. With hundreds of enemies to fight, it takes great courage to heal instead of fight. Your heart has considered that saving lives is more important than killing. Thus you have given an impression of a strong attachment to life to many soldiers. You will also get a chance to save their lives.

- * Due to the success of miracle nursing, all stats increase by 1.
- * Affection increases by 10.
- * Fame increases by 50.
- * Alignment towards Good increases by 50.
- * The defense of all allies increases by 20% for 2 hours.

The Miracle Nursing was a success and you have acquired the title 'Caretaker of the Battlefield.'

Fame as a Caretaker has increased, so you will receive praises from many soldiers.

- * As a title bonus all stats will increase by 2.
- * Fame increases by 50.

Thanks to miracle nursing, the defense of the Hermes Alliance increased by 20%! But the miracle didn't end there. His Nursing skill which had stopped at 290 increased to 300! Nursing was now an advanced skill.

Thanks to your sincerity and caring, your Nursing skill has risen.

Nursing (Advanced, Active): You can take care of the patients for a long time and use various treatments more effectively. In addition, the performance of any type of potions has increased by 30%. <When used on a patient, energy and courage increases by 50%. Mana consumption: 10>

* Advanced Nursing bonus effect: Great Sacrifice <Your desire to save as many patients as possible has increased the effects of all medical treatments to the extreme (If you use all the recovery potions in your bag then the recovery effect is given to your surrounding allies. It is impossible to choose the number of recovery potions. The effect changes with the number and rating of the recovery potions.)>

= Minimum trigger limit of 10: Minor recovery effects on allies within 10 metres.

= 50~100 potions: Intermediate recovery effects on all allies within a 100~200 metre radius.

= More than 100: High recovery effect on all allies within 300 metres. (Every

additional 5 recovery potions used will increase the range by 5 metres and recovery amount by 50.)

‘Great Sacrifice!’

Ark looked at the message window with bemusement. An advanced magic that recovered 800~1000 health was only possible with holy magic. If he used Great Sacrifice then he might be able to reverse the battle situation. But that thought was overwhelming to Ark. It had a reckless penalty where he had to use all the recovery potions in his bag!

At the moment he had 107 potions in his bag! 100 of it were the intermediate potions he took from Raiden. It cost 2000 gold to buy 100 intermediate potions in shops! Yet he had to use it to recover the health of the people here.....!

‘I’ve received 100 potions thanks to Raiden! Why now.....?’

How could he possibly use it in this way? Were they purposely taunting him by giving him 100 potions and then making him use it like this? Even if he hit someone, it wasn’t possible for him to kill them.

‘But if this siege fails then there would be no other opportunity to defeat Alan. Then Sid.....’

His 5000 gold was confiscated because Sid was trapped in jail! Of course 5000 gold was a lot more than 2000.

‘I may regret this decision! But.....I can’t lose to Alan! Yes, I’ll just have to extort more out of Raiden. But first I have to turn this siege around!’

Ark convinced himself and shouted with a voice filled with tears.

“Great Sacrifice!”

His bag automatically opened and 100 potions rose into the sky. The potions formed into a huge jar before scattering around the battlefield.

‘Ah ah ah, my 2000 gold.....!’

Ark shed tears like a waterfall as he looked at the scattering potions. All that money gone. All that money certainly had a huge effect. The health of the Hermes Alliance began to recover at a tremendous pace. The effects of advanced Nursing were also successfully applied! The defense and health recovery was immediately converted to combat power. But the Hermes Alliance didn’t use its powers to attack

immediately. It was the first time that they had experienced such an absurd situation.

“Eh? Why has my defense increased?”

“The Miracle Nursing effect it says, what is that?”

“What is with the huge jar just then? Was there such a potion?”

“Do you know? This might be a pioneer’s skill that we are seeing for the first time.”

“Indeed, there are a lot of pioneer skills that we don’t know about.”

Then Ark shouted in a threatening noise.

“These damn slow beep—! Why are you just standing around chatting?”

Even though he had just wasted 2000 gold on their recovery. Why? His spirit heated up. Even though 1 minute and 1 second had passed, they were just standing around discussing the 107 potions that had scattered! Those stupid idiots haven’t even grasped the situation.....Ark’s resentment echoed through the battlefield in the form of curses. However, he didn’t use intimidation for the effects. He really felt like cursing deep inside. It was a situation which caused Intimidation to have the best effect.

-‘Intimidation’ has triggered a critical effect!

The intimidating effect couldn’t affect his allies. Thanks to that the Hermes Alliance wasn’t affected but the members of the Dawn Blade coalition became frightened and had the morale decreased. Lowering morale in a battle had a significant impact on overall combat power. The laws of reality were also applied to the game.

‘Intimidation’ has lowered the courage and morale of all Dawn Blade coalition members in range by 30%.

Morale affects all troops no matter the size of the party. The most important role of a commander is to raise his troop’s morale, if the moral of the troops under the commander falls then the effects of ‘Command’, ‘Leadership’, ‘Tactics’ and ‘Strategy’ will also fall until morale is recovered.

<The influence of the Dawn Blade commanders has decreased by 30 %.>

The morale of soldiers was clearly important in a battle. If there was high moral then the commanders could move the soldiers, but once moral falls then any strategy or order would fail.

‘Intimidation can also be utilized in such a manner!’

It was indeed New World!

It was the miraculous effect of the combo of Advanced Nursing and Miracle Nursing! Therefore while the stats of the Dawn Blade members fell, the Hermes Alliance had their defense raised and health recovered. Thanks to the negative effect on the enemies and positive effect on allies, their combat power doubled.

“Their attacks have weakened!”

“With our increased defense and health, now is an opportunity!”

“The cavalry unit has also run out of mana! Now is the chance to beat them!”

The Hermes Alliance who had its spirit recovered shouted and ran. The cavalry troops who had constantly used buffs and healing magic had run out of mana.

“Catch Alan!”

“Inflict our sorrow on the mounted troops!”

With their high morale, the Hermes Alliance had cornered the cavalry troops.

“Sheesh, the catapults are already ruined. Retreat!”

Alan had exquisite timing.....he had used the opportunity to inflict a blow that increased his chances of winning the siege to 70%. But thanks to Ark’s Miracle combo, he had no choice but to retreat.

“God dammit, it should’ve ended then.....!”

Alan clutched his fist tightly. The Hermes Alliance had been halved. While one Defense Tower had been destroyed, Noel and Hamanechi were still stuck at the

other one. The game should've been decided. He should've clinched it. However, he missed the chance because of the absurd potion jar.

'Fortunately, the summoners and catapults are destroyed so the walls should remain intact.....'

If Noel and Hamanechi destroyed the tower then they would join the battle. Then he could no longer be confident of victory.

"Alan-nim."

He turned his head to see Lariette walking from behind with a tired face. She was not the only one tired, the users had been playing the game for 20 hours. Then Alan remembered what happened on the battlefield and quickly explained.

"Lariette-nim, I apologise about what happened before....."

"That's enough. It happened."

Then Lariette hesitated before saying."

"I have something to say to Alan-nim."

"Please say it."

"No matter the results, after the siege I will withdraw from the guild."

"Yes?" What is that.....is it because of what happened just now?"

"No, it's not that. I've been thinking about it for a while."

"For a while? Did you forget? If you're with me then you can pass the entrance examination. I'm someone who will definitely pass so Lariette-nim will pass as well!"

"That's right. I originally joined Alan-nim because of the examination. But.....that's not all. I also wanted to meet a good person and play this game happily. I had hoped that partner was Alan-nim. But....."

Lariette shook her head with a regretful expression.

"I'm not amused right now."

"A fun game? I don't see how that has anything to do with passing the exam!"

"You still don't understand."

"I don't understand? Me? It is Lariette-nim that doesn't understand a thing."

"You never know."

Lariette sighed and turned around.

"Alan-nim's thoughts on the game are completely different from mine."

"Lariette-nim, wait a minute!"

"Anyway, I've told you about my intentions. Then....."

"Damn it, why on earth? How are you dissatisfied?"

The sound of something hitting the table could be heard. However, she already couldn't hear it.

'In such a situation.....he didn't attack me.'

Lariette closed her eyes for a moment and remembered the situation. It was just something that happened in a game. To die or live wasn't a very important issue. And yet, at that moment her heart was fluctuating. Ark stopped his sword. Why? She wanted to know the reason. She became tired from thinking about it so deeply. But the feeling when he stopped the sword and then the emotion that she felt when she looked into his eyes, she wanted to know what it meant.

'I want to ask him. After we meet.....I want to ask.....'

However, if she was with Alan then she would have no chance to ask the question. So she decided to leave. After she became free then she would like to ask.....

"You need 100 more intermediate potions?"

Raiden asked in an astounded voice. After Alan retreated to the castle, Raiden was reorganizing his troops for a counterattack.

"It was because of the enormous potion that you evaded a crisis just now! That was a skill that I used!"

"It was a skill that you used?"

"Yes, and it used my 100 intermediate potions! You can ask the people surrounding me if you don't believe it. You promised to supply me with the necessary materials for the siege so give it to me!"

Raiden nodded after a moment.

"Okay, then I'll give it to you."

"R-really? It's not a lie?"

Ark asked again. In fact, he hadn't expected much. But he was giving it obediently. Damn, if he knew then he would've said 300.

"Since you defeated the Defense Tower, you were more useful than expected. So you've qualified to receive it. But now right now. After we win the siege then I'll calculate it. I've used almost all the guild funds on the siege. I can't afford to pay for that many potions if I lose the siege."

"Well.....I guess I have to concede that much."

"But it is frankly worrying. Alan ruined our catapults. Since our summoners are also dead, I don't know if the castle walls can be broken in time....."

Raiden said with a sigh. If the special siege weapons broke down then users wouldn't be able to repair it. And since this was a siege battle, NPC craftsmen wouldn't have been hired. But Ark just grinned and said.

"Okay, I can resolve that."

Ark and Raiden moved towards where the catapults were. Then he immediately had the raccoons inspect it.

"It should take half a day."

"If it is half a day for NPCs then that is 2 hours. Is that enough time to reorganize the troops?"

"They can fix it?"

"Of course."

Ark nodded and made a circle with his fingers.

"But the cost of repairs is 50 gold. 20 catapults means 1000 gold."

Raiden muttered under his breath.

"That greedy bastard.....he's also charging for the repairs?"

"Doesn't everyone have to eat? If you don't want to then don't."

"I understand. Then a credit note....."

"I don't want empty promises. Shall we sign a contract first?"

The reason that Raiden was being so obedient was his need to win the siege. Since he was willing to sacrifice everything to win, it was a golden chance for Ark. Once he regained the money from Alan, he would've also obtained Raiden's.

Merchant's agreement.

<Contractor: Raiden=Ark>

If the Hermes Guild Leader Raiden wins the siege, once he becomes Lord of Silvana he will give Ark 100 intermediate potions as well as 1000 gold for the repair cost of the catapults.

In the end, Raiden drew up an agreement through a merchant in the Hermes guild.

'I'm a bit uncomfortable but I had to do it.....'

Raiden had no other choice.

'I've secured 3000 gold!'

Ark's heart rate rose at the sight of the contract. It was money that would pay for war costs. It wasn't a few hundred old but thousands of gold. After making up his mind to knock Alan down, that was the biggest problem. He'll say it again. War costs a lot of money. That means that people who go to war will spend money like it was water. Thousands of people would have their money rolling on the ground. Then wasn't there a chance for him to obtain some extra funds in this situation?

'Yes, I've thought of everything.'

Although there were still a few hours left in the siege, Raiden was busy making plans to occupy the castle. Therefore he was paying no attention to where Ark was resting inconspicuously.

“Snake, from now on go around the battlefield and swallow whatever you can.”

Ark commanded Snake but he also gave a few precautions. In Nagaran, the probability of users dropping items was less than 1%. In addition, there was a high probability that only potions would drop from the bag. So Ark didn’t consider it at all until he destroyed the Defense Tower, and then he changed his mind.

Improved Crossbow (Magic)

Weapon type: Crossbow

Attack: 15~35

Durability: 55/70

Weight: 20

User restriction: Level 80 or more

The latest modifications have been made to the traditional crossbow. The frame of the bow has been replaced with steel smelted using special techniques, increasing the damage and range of the crossbow by 3 times. However as it is heavier and more difficult to use, the shooting speed will decrease a lot.

<Option: Attack +5, Range +20 metres, Firing Speed -30%>

While attacking a bunker, one of the archers had dropped a crossbow.

‘Yes, the probability of dropping items in Nagaran is low. But that doesn’t mean that it absolutely won’t drop!’

Even if it was 0.1%, there were still 4000 people. Wouldn’t the items start dropping once the body count piles up? In addition, only high level players participated in the siege! With luck, there was a huge probability of hitting at least one jackpot!

Fortunately, everyone’s nerves were focused on the end of the siege. If they saw him looking around dead bodies then a stir would be caused. No, even if he saw items

fall he wouldn't dare pick it up. But if it was Snake, no one would notice it snooping around the dead bodies.

'This is a huge opportunity to take the items!'

"Ssak ssak ssak!"

Snake boldly moved through the gap between corpses. Ark was in a situation where he couldn't afford to lose any money.

'After all, money is money.....that Alan, I won't forgive him for killing Roco!'

Ark's rage once again built up in him during the resting period. Anyway.....it was another reason why he couldn't forgive Alan. The Hermes Alliance had suffered a lot of damage during the attack. Hermes and the Silver Moon guild had lost 40% of their forces while Fugetsu and Dark Eden had also received considerable damage. In JusticeMan's party, Roco and 6 rehabilitation members had died with only 4 surviving. Out of the 70 NPCs, 30 had died from Lancel Village and Jackson. After Roco died, the rehabilitation members started rampaging, causing their formation to collapse and more individual combat. Since Dark Eden's level was low, it was too premature for them to take part in individual combat. It was understandable considering the war.

'Although the deaths of the NPCs weigh on my mind, it is okay since the elders expected there to be some casualties. The war has been quite profitable, so I should pay attention to maintaining my troops.'

While they were repairing the catapults, Ark took off their clothes and headed towards the well. Even a 1% increase in defense would raise the survival rate. Thus he used his laundry skill to increase the defense of leather armour by 5% for 4 hours. All the skills he learnt had a use somewhere. Roco was dead but he could maintain the additional effects of laundry since Ark learned the skill off her. Well thanks to the circumstances, Ark had a happy smile on his face even while washing dozens of armour.

"Everything's sorted. Now all that's left is to win the siege. And I will knock Alan down and become rich. Washing dozens of clothes is such a wonderful feeling! Hahaha!"

Alan had led a unit and appeared directly. The results of the siege hinged on his survival. Hermes had a huge problem when they couldn't attack Alan. However, the attack failed thanks to Ark and he retreated after receiving a huge blow. And Noel and Hamanechi haven't even joined up with Hermes yet. As soon as they destroyed

the defense tower than the chances of winning was 6:4. No, since Hermes was superior it would probably 7:3.

“It’s possible to win. No, I have to win. Sid’s 5000 gold is hanging on this! And the 3000 gold from Raiden! That is 8000 gold from this war. In addition, there are the 30% proceeds from the castle! All those things are mine once I beat Alan. I have to do whatever it takes to win!”

But.....Ark was only thinking about Nagaran. There were other things happening in the world that wasn’t visible to his eyes. It was unclear just how much money this huge battle would take.

The remaining time was only 7 hours!

A bad relationship with Alan. And a battle worth 8000 gold! The final phase of the siege where deceit and betrayals were swirling was beginning.

TO BE CONTINUED

[End of Book 07]